564 within a few feet. Equal interdining took place
[244] only between members of the same caste or sub-caste, but at a higher caste feast members of lower castes might receive food from higher caste hosts. The Nambudiris, royalty, chiefs, temple servants, retainers, middle-class and servant Nayars thus collectively formed the
[611] "good" castes of the society. Nambudiris and two small castes of their temple servants were patrilineal; all the rest were matrilineal. (1)

[361] Below all these castes, living in a separate
[783] part of the village, were the "low" or "polluting" castes. These included in order of rank, Iravas or toddy-tappers and tenant-farmers, with 20 to 50 households per village; Kanisans (astrologers) with one to three households per village; the artisan castes (blacksmiths, gold-smiths, carpenters, bell-metal workers and stone-masons, who ranked equally) each with one to three houses per village; low caste washermen and barbers (who ranked equally) each with one to five houses per village; and bow-makers, each with about one to ten houses per village. Iravas,
[611] Kanisans, washermen and barbers had double
[595] unilineal descent: [25] patrilineal, patrilocal ex-
[614] tended families with fraternal polyandry, cross-cut by large exogamous dispersed matrilineal clans. Artisans and bow-makers had patrilineal descent with patrilocal extended families and
[837] fraternal polyandry. All of these castes worked for each other and for the "good" castes of the
524 village. Iravas, the most numerous and influen-
427 tial, owned their own house-sites and leased rice-lands and other garden lands from the matrilineal

514 571 631 was confined to the village or (in the case of the smaller castes) a group of adjacent villages. For retainer-Nayars, apart from their excursions in war, it was confined to the group of adjacent villages of one subcaste; for temple servants and Nayar village headmen, the nad; for naduvaris and kings, the kingdom; and for Nambudiris, Kerala. It may be hypothesized that this variation in the field of social relations of the different ranked orders of the society is intrinsic in any feudal system with centralized political institutions.

582 611 (4) Hypergamy in the Upper Castes

Each of the castes below middle class Nayars was endogamous, as is usually in the caste system throughout India. But among the higher "clean" castes, a complicated system of hypergamous unions linked the several groups. By hypergamy I mean the union of a man of higher caste with a woman of lower caste.

582 611 596 In discussing hypergamy, it is necessary first to explain the descent-system of Nambudiris. In the patrilineal [36] extended family of Nambudiris, only the eldest son was permitted to marry, with Vedic rites, within his own caste and beget children for his family. Younger sons 595 had recognized liaisons (not initiated with Vedic rites and regarded by Nambudiris not as marriage but as concubinage) with women of the matrilineal castes, whose children belonged to the mother's caste and lineage by matrilineal descent. However, if in any generation the eldest Nambudiri son was was sterile, the second son

596 might marry a Nambudiri woman and beget
611 children for his family. Nambudiri spinsters,
582 of whom there were many, remained in their natal houses and were maintained by their kinsmen. The eldest son of a Nambudiri family
[595] might however have several Nambudiri wives and also several Nayar concubines. Nambudiri younger sons lived and ate in their natal households, headship of which passed from the eldest son down the line of his brothers and then dropped to the eldest son in the filial generation. In this way the Nambudiri family was prevented from splitting into segments, and was enabled to maintain its position on the ancestral estate over
[597] many generations. If in any generation a family had no son, succession was ensured by the adoption of a daughter's husband or of a man of a family related in the cognatic line.

613 In the royal lineages, since each lineage,
582 though exogamous, regarded itself as a separate
837 caste and admitted no peers, sexual unions were entirely hypergamous. In Cochin and Walluvanad, royal women had liaisons only with [37] Nambudiris of the highest and wealthiest subcastes within the kingdom; royal men, with women of chiefly, village headmen or retainer Nayar lineages. In the Calicut lineage, which came to power later and took time to establish its ritual rank, royal women till the 18th century had liaisons either with Nambudiri men or with men of the ancient royal lineages of tributary kingdoms, who though through conquest were subordinate to the upstart Zamorins, were still regarded by them as of higher ritual rank. Later

592 His relationship was however remembered, and
582 he was regarded as the ritual father (appan) of
608 the woman's children, in contrast to their genitor or to the step-father who happened currently to be visiting a woman, these latter both being
608 called acchan. Ritual fatherhood meant nothing
764 at all except that at the death of the tali-tier,
602 the woman and all her children must observe death pollution. Death pollution was otherwise observed only for matrilineal kin; it was not until recently observed for the genitor or other lovers of the mother. Its observance for the tali-tier shows that even the Nayars, with their extreme emphasis on the matrilineal line and total exclusion of the husband and father from economic, legal or ceremonial rights, recognize the field of kinship to extend beyond the unilineal descent-group, and felt the need to give ceremonial recognition [73] to the concepts of marriage and of paternity, even though they gave none to the individual husband and father.

595 After the tali-rite and shortly before or after
833 puberty, a girl might enter into a number of unions with men of her own subcaste (including, if both wished, the ritual husband of the tali-rite) or of an appropriate higher subcaste. Similarly, a man might cohabit with any number of mistresses from his own or an appropriate lower subcaste. A man usually visited a mistress after supper, and left before breakfast; even today in orthodox matrilocal households men eat with their sisters and mothers and visit or accept food in the conjugal house in the daytime only on special invitation from the wife's karanavan.

595 Traditionally, the visiting lover placed his wea-
583 pons outside the door as a warning to other me
that he was within. My informants reported
that more recently, until the end of the nine-
teenth century in some villages, if two lovers
of a woman called on the same night the one who
came last slept outside on the verandah. Usual
the regular lovers of a woman (who might not be
from the same lineage) knew each other and in-
formally agreed upon their turns.

595 It is difficult to decide from the evidence whe
ther this instution of combined polyandrous and
polygynous mating can strictly be regarded as
"marriage" in any usual sense of the term.
Personally, I prefer the word "marriage" for
the ritual marriage of talikettukalyanam (which
old English speaking Nayars even today state to
have been "the real marriage"), because it gave
ceremonial recognition, to a stable relationship
of perpetual hereditary affinal kinship between
lineages in the local group. Moreover, althoug
exclusive sexual rights in the woman were given
up at once at the "divorce", the observance of
death [74] pollution by the woman and her child-
ren indicates that in some sense the relation-
ship was thought to continue for life.

595 However, the evidence suggests that post-
684 puberty liaisons too were perhaps not entirely
551 promiscuous; moreover, the more permanent
of them at all events were attended by ceremon-
ial obligations. First, liaisons were strictly
limited to men of the appropriate "good" castes;
sex unions with men of lower caste were cate-
gorically forbidden and for women, punishable

595 by immediate death. For this reason it was
684 necessary, when a woman became pregnant, for
685 her to be able to name one or more lovers of appropriate subcaste who might have fathered the child. These men must then acknowledge their responsibility by paying the expenses of delivery (petta chilavu - clothing, rice and vegetables) to the barber-midwife who attended at births. If no appropriate lover came forward to do so, the woman was deemed to have cohabited with a low caste man and was excommunicated. Even today, a girl who becomes pregnant before the (modern) marriage ceremony is easily exculpated if she can name a Nayar or higher caste lover who will pay her deliver expenses. She is then by old custom tacitly regarded as having been married to him, and if he chooses not to visit her again, has little difficulty in finding a second husband. If however no expenses are paid, she is assumed to have had relations with a low caste man, a Christian or a Muslim, and though excommunication is not now effectual, she falls into social disgrace. She is unlikely henceforth to find a Nayar husband, and her household may find difficulty in marrying away other girls of her generation

595 In addition to the delivery expenses, a Nayar
586 of the local subcaste group who entered into a relationship with a girl was expected to present her with a loincloth on the first night of visiting her. Thereafter, if he continued to visit her, he must make customary gifts of clothing, [75] bathing- and hair-oil, and vegetables, at Onam, Vishu and Tiruvadhira, (10) the three main

595 [586] festivals of the year. If he failed to do so on one of these occasions, it was a tacit sign that he had ended the relationship. However, it seems clear from the literature that though a woman might have a small number of regular visitors of her local group - or even only one - these had no exclusive sexual rights, and that she might receive others at will if they were passing through her village. The evidence in uncertain, however, about the total number of men a woman might entertain concurrently. Nicolo di Conti (1444) writes that "The Nayar women are allowed to take several husbands, so that some have ten or more". Varthema (1510), writes that "One woman has five, six or seven husbands, or even eight. And one sleeps with her one night and one another night" (p. 146). These reports suggest that the number of lovers a woman might have was limited. Hamilton states that in the eighteenth century this was definitely so, and that a woman might have "twelve but no more at one time." (p. 310) Barbosa, however, writing in 1520, says that "in addition to the three or four lovers whom every woman has, they never refuse themselves to any Brahmene or Nayre who gives them money." His view is supported by Pietro della Valle (1624), who says "The Gentile Nairi have no peculiar wives, but all women are common amongst them" (II, p. 379). It seems probable, therefore, that each woman had a small number of fairly regular lovers who made ceremonial gifts to her at the festivals, but that a man might without difficulty gain access to a strange woman when he was

595 away from his village on military service. Buchanan, as late as 1807, reports that Nayar women vied with each other as to the number of lovers they could obtain. (p. 411).

595 584 644 [76] Until late in the nineteenth century, women evidently had freedom to choose their own lovers. This was until recently still the case in the royal lineages, where women selected their lovers from a small group of aristocratic Nambudiri families. Young men of these families were introduced into the palaces by older kinsmen already established there, and might become ensconced as regular occupants of the Nambudiri quarters until such time as they were dismissed by their royal mistresses. The princes of the lineage appear to have had little say in arranging these unions. I was told by one informant that the senior Raja periodically held an audience at which Nambudiris currently living in the palace were presented to him by his secretaries, but that otherwise he had little knowledge of

595 584 marital life within the palace. Today, as also in commoner lineages, this is no longer the case: monogamy has been customary in all subcastes for the past forty to fifty years, and the prospective husband of a woman is selected by her karanavan or elder brother. In orthodox families of the retainer subcastes, at least for the past fifty years, the karanavan or the elder brother of a woman has had the right to dismiss a husband of whom he disapproved. Alternatively

[582] a woman may still, as of old, divorce her husband at will by refusing him admittance or causing her kinsmen to place his sleeping mat

outside on the verandah before he comes to visit her.

These statements however again require some modification in the case of hypergamous unions. In recent years at all events, a powerful Nambudiri or royal landowner might occasionally force his attentions on a Nayar woman, whose family would be unlikely to oppose him. In two cases I even heard of Nambudiris who had succeeded in carrying on a liaison with a dead Nayar wife's younger sister, though this is contrary to Nayar rules of mating and led to unhappiness and strong covert [77] disapproval among the woman's kinsmen. In general, however, the traditional picture of Nayar marriage is one in which women voluntarily seek the favours of men: rape, for example, is a crime apparently unheard of among them. Certainly, cases are recorded of the dismissal of a higher caste man by a Nayar woman.

Combined polyandrous and polygynous mating had a function in maintaining the unity of the lineage. It seems that in every matrilineal system one basic conflict is inherent, namely the conflict between a man's ties to his natal kin on the one hand and to his kin by marriage and procreation on the other. In the Nayar system in this area, the conflict was resolved by almost completely eliminating the claims of the father and his kin. Polyandry and polygyny, combined, minimized the rights of the husband and father, and dispersed their roles between a number of men. This preserved the unity of the lineage, by preventing the close attachment of men to

613 their children in other lineages. The separa-
592 tion of the ritual marriage (the tali-rite) from
595 actual cohabitation (sambandham, initiated without religious rites) underlined the necessity to the lineage of marriage and procreation, and the exclusion of the individual husband and father from a legally and socially significant role in relation to it.

594 It is clear therefore that whatever name we
592 give to the traditional marital relationship
566 among Nayars, the elementary family, contrary to the view of Murdock (11), did not exist as an economic, legal or ceremonial unit among them. This circumstance, which is perhaps unique in the world, was evidently made possible by their specialized role as one caste group in a larger society in which, in general, marriage and the elementary family were institutionalized. First, the Nayar system could probably not have come about in any but a leisure class supported by the labour of tenants and serfs. Because of this, young Nayar men need give economic [78] support neither to their wives nor to their sisters. Women were the people who sat at home on the land; their maintenance was assured by the payment of rents from low caste tenants and the labour of serfs, and it was necessary to have only one old man living with them to manage
701 their financial affairs. The feudal relationships
595 of the caste system thus freed all able-bodied men for their occupation as a mobile militia. In explaining their peculiar marriage relationships, I am inclined to emphasize the military organization even more than the status of Nayars

as a leisure class, since leisure classes without polyandry are common all over India.

The Nayars themselves appear to have recognized a connection between their occupation as a militia and the custom of plural marriages by which men were prevented from forming permanent attachments to wife and children. Barbosa, writing of plural marriages, reports that "it is said that the kings made this law, in order that the Nayars should not be covetous and should not abandon the king's service" (p. 124). Similarly Joao de Barros, writing in the early sixteenth century, says: "They say that this (polyandry) is a very ancient law among them, and that it springs from the wish of a certain prince to relieve the men of the burden of maintaining sons, and leave them ready for warlike service to which they are bound whensoever the king calls upon them." (12)

Nayar marriage may thus perhaps be seen as comparable to other military institutions, for example the age sets of bachelors among the Masai (Merker, 1904, pp. 82-3) or the age regiments of the Zulus (Bryant, 1929, pp. 124, 642-7) in the reign of Shaka. In both these societies those groups of the population organized for warfare were prevented from forming attachments to wives and children. Shaka achieved this among the Zulus by compelling men of the age regiments [79] under 35 to 40 to remain (at least in theory) celibate. Among the Masai, a soldier might form as many connections as he wished, and promiscuous intercourse was encouraged between men of the bachelor age sets

595 and girls of suitable age. But only older men
701 were permitted to marry and form a household with their wives and children.

The similarity between systems like the Masai and the Nayar system is that in those groups of the population organized for warfare, male sexuality was divorced from the upbringing of children, which among Nayars took place within the lineage and concerned only lineage members. Among the Masai this freeing of a man's sexual life from the responsibilities of child-rearing concerned only certain age-groups of men, while in Calicut and Cochin it applied to the total male population of one caste.

595 The extent to which Nayar kinship was in-
701 fluenced by their relation to the land and by the
526 military organization becomes clearer when we
184 compare the kinship system in Calicut and Cochin with that of Nayars in the northern kingdoms of Kolattunad, Kottayam and Kadattunad, north of the Kora River which formed the northern boundary of the Calicut kingdom at the height of the Zamorin's power.

Apart from the narrow coastal belt, the country in north Malabar was rocky and mountainous, and comprised much waste land and virgin forest. Perhaps because of this, the sparsely populated northern kingdom never achieved the degree of political centralization found in the central kingdom. Government was ostensibly by nadavaris owing a tenuous allegiance to their Rajas. In fact, however, in all these kingdoms chiefs perpetually rebelled against their Raja and shook off his power for long periods, while

595 within the chiefdom political control over and
701 within villages was insufficient and feuds were
566 common between adjacent villages and between
184 individual lineages. The Nayars were not organized as a permanent militia of retainers, but merely fought occasionally on [80] behalf of a local chief. Apart from small subcastes of servants round the palaces, they formed an independent caste of cultivators owning their own land and lacking the overlordship of Nambudiri Brahmans and the service of agricultural serfs. Consistent with the absence of a permanent military organization, we find that in the North, Nayar men themselves managed the cultivation of their estates and sometimes actually worked the land, and that here residence was traditionally avunculocal, and polyandry unknown.

835 (3) Traditional Incest Prohibitions and Prefer-
582 ential Marriages

The traditional incest prohibitions were simple. In all castes of Malabar, prohibitions on sex-relations between kin coincide with prohibitions on marriage; this in any case would obviously be so among Nayars who did not distinguish the two and had no concept of adultery. Sex relations were strictly prohibited within the lineage: infringement of this rule was traditionally punishable by death, and during British rule with excommunication. Relations were also prohibited between a woman and two men of the same property-group, as between a man and two women of the same property-group. Sororal polygyny and fraternal polyandry, as well

582 Sororal polygyny and fraternal polyandry, as well
595 as marriage to the dead spouse's sibling, were
835 thus automatically forbidden. This rule appears to relate to the paramount need to keep minimal the potential rivalries between individuals of the same sex within the group. It was also consistent with the relationship of respect between
585 them. Even today, when ceremonies mark the
602 start of the post-puberty marriage, a man's
595 lineage elders may not attend his marriage ceremonies and feast. He goes to the bride's house with unrelated friends of his own age or with affines, ideally, his sister's husbands. For marriage is a jolly undertaking and only such men may joke together about sexual scandals in the village. But [81] reticence is required in discussing their own marriage, and the respect a woman owes her older kinswomen demands that she interfere in no way in their marital life. Today, a woman treats her father or step-father with affectionate respect of a less formal kind than that accorded to the mother's brother, but she should not touch him after puberty. With her elder sister's husband she observes still greater formality, based on the incest prohibition. The ban on sororal polygyny is particularly comprehensible in view of the fact that Nayar women were traditionally open rivals for the attentions of men: many writers mention this and it is still discernible in villages today. The mutual respect and amity required of women of the same property-group was incompatible with such rivalry.

835 However, the ban on relations with two persons
582 of the same group was less stringent than the

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604 to the mother's husband in their earliest years, there seems no doubt
613 that a great part of their hostility to male elders became focused on
561 the mother's brothers by about the age of five, and that much of it
578 remained conscious. Thus occasional stories are told today of nephews who poisoned or stabbed their mothers' brothers and it is often remarked that kāranavans are "hated" and that "their position is not safe." Such tales of violence are regarded as shocking, but they do not arouse the horror with which a Hindu of the patrilineal castes would receive a story of patricide.

604 Relationships with the mother's mother's brothers were less intense
561 and rivalrous than with the mother's brothers. Until the age of three
578 or four a small boy might be a playful visitor to the room of the great-uncle who was his kāranavan. Often, this elder died while he was still small, so that the boy rctained only affectionate memories of him. Otherwise he learned to behave with even greater formality to this elder than to his mother's brothers. He saw the great-uncle less often, however, and was seldom directly punished by him, so that the relationship tended to remain one of distant geniality.

604 MAN-SISTER'S DAUGHTER

As the head of her taravād a kāranavan owed his sister's daughter maintenance, shelter, and legal and physical protection. At her tāli rite and during her subsequent marriage relationships, only the sexual rights in a woman were lost to her taravād. All other rights, in her procreative powers and domestic services, remained vested in her taravād, represented by its kāranavan. He could command her obedience in the performance of household and minor agricultural work.
[429] He automatically became the full legal guardian of children born to
[684] her legitimately. If she seriously infringed the religious laws of her caste, for example, by having sex relations with a man of lower caste, it was his duty to expel her from the taravād and his right (very occasionally exercised) to put her to death by the sword.

604 In the nineteenth century, when monogamy gradually became cus-
584 tomary, a kāranavan arranged the marriage of his sister's daughter.
595 In earlier periods Nayar women seem to have exercised considerable
178 freedom to select or reject their husbands. A woman might not, however, oppose her kāranavan's right to dismiss an unwelcome husband.

604 All the mother's brothers of a woman had the right to command her domestic services and to discipline her in minor ways. As in the case of a boy, they might play with her until she reached the age of three or four, after which they became somewhat feared authorities.
[861] A man might occasionally beat his sister's daughter, until the age of

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If he wished, a girl's ritual bridegroom might later visit her as one of a series of husbands, but he had no prior claims and was not obliged to do so. The woman in turn owed no obligations to him except that at his death, she and all her children by whatever biological fathers must observe fifteen days of ritual pollution for him. Ritual pollution was otherwise observed only for matrilineal kin. Until modern times it was not observed by a woman and her children for a visiting husband who was not also the woman's ritual husband. In addition, if they knew him, a woman's children called her ritual husband by the Dravidian word *appan*, the term used for the father in the patrilineal castes. Their mother's visiting husbands they called by the Sanskrit term *acchan;* this word means "leader" or "lord" and was also sometimes applied as a title to village headmen and military leaders.

After the tāli rite and shortly before or after puberty, a woman might enter into a number of sexual relationships with men of her local caste group or of an appropriate higher caste. Similarly, a Nayar might visit a number of wives of his own or an appropriate lower Nayar caste. Among retainer Nayars, by far the majority of unions were between persons of the same caste. A very few favored women had husbands from the lineages of temple servants, village headmen, chiefs, or royalty, or from houses of Nambudiri Brahmans of relatively low rank. A smaller number of Nayar retainers had wives in the lower-ranking castes of Nayar temple menials, but not in the servant castes of Nayar washermen and barbers, which were endogamous.

It is not certain how many husbands a woman might have at one time; various writers[8] of the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries mention between three and twelve (Logan, 1951, I: 136–137). Others add that women "never refused themselves" to occasional Brahman or Nayar visitors of appropriate rank. It seems probable that each woman had a small number of husbands from her local caste group who, while their relationship lasted, visited her regularly, but that women also received occasional fleeting visits from itinerant Nayars of appropriate rank, perhaps mainly during military operations.

[8] See, for example, Abdu 'r Razzak (1441), Nicolo di Conti (1444), Hieronimo de Santo Stephano (1563), and Cesar Fredericke (1563), in Hakluyt Society Publications Vol. 22, 1857; Duarte Barbosa (1518) and Joao de Barros (early sixteenth century) in Dames, 1921, II: 124, 241; Ludovico di Varthema (1503–1508), tr. J. W. Jones, 1863; 146; Zein-ud-Deen (1579), tr. Rowlandson, 1833: 63; J. H. van Linschoten (1596) in Hakluyt Society Publications Vol. 71: 279; Pietro della Valle (1624), Hakluyt Society Publications Vol. 85: 579; Hamilton (1727), ed. Penzer, 1930, I: 310; Buchanan, 1807, II: 411.

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A husband normally visited his wife after eating supper in his natal home, and left before breakfast. Even today in many orthodox Nayar homes men eat regularly in their taravāds and accept food in their wives' homes only on special invitation from their wives' kāranavans. Traditionally a husband placed his weapons outside his wife's door as a sign to other men that he was within. My informants in a Cochin village reported that, within living memory in the late nineteenth century, if two husbands called on the same night the one who came last might sleep outside on the veranda. Usually a woman's regular husbands knew each other and informally agreed upon their turns.

The relationship with the visiting husband was called *sambandham* (Sanskrit, "joining together"). At the start of a girl's first sambandham her husband came to her house privately at night, sometimes with a few friends of his own age. In the presence of the girl's kin he presented her with a white cloth of the kind worn as a skirt. The occasion was not marked by feasting. Later husbands might or might not present the cloth. A transient visitor is said to have left a gold coin beneath the woman's pillow, and a regular husband might do the same on the first night of his union.

While his relationship lasted, a regular husband was expected to make gifts to his wife at the three main festivals of the year. Vishu, in April, was the Malayalam New Year; Onam, in September, was a harvest festival; Tiruvadira, in December, was a women's festival to Kama Devan, the god of passion. The gifts were of bathing oil, bananas, wafer biscuits, and betel leaves and areca nuts for chewing. In some areas a husband also gave a loin cloth of superior quality at Onam. The gifts were prepared by women of the husband's taravād, and he should present them in person to each of his wives on the festival day. If a husband failed to make these gifts it was a tacit sign that he had ended the relationship. It should be noted that the gifts, trivial in value, were gifts of courtship and were in no sense maintenance. Bathing oil is a feminine toilet requisite; wafer biscuits are delicacies served at feasts; and the giving of chewing materials between a man and a woman is everywhere in South India associated with courtship or with the first night of marriage. A husband had no obligation at all to maintain his wife, for she received her food, shelter, and regular clothing from her taravād.

The only other obligations of a husband came at the birth of a child. When a woman became pregnant it was necessary for one or more men of appropriate caste to acknowledge possible biological

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paternity. This they did by making gifts to the woman herself and to the midwife immediately after the birth. Any man who had visited the woman in the appropriate time period was required to make these gifts. If a man refused, he could be called upon by the caste assembly to fulfill his obligation. The gifts comprised two new lower cloths for the mother and one cloth and a quantity of paddy as payment to the Nayar woman barber who attended at the delivery. Again, these gifts were clearly legal and ceremonial tokens rather than objects of substantial economic value. Legally, however, their transfer was of the utmost significance. For if no man would consent to make the delivery payments, the woman was assumed to have had sex relations with a man of lower caste or with a Muslim or a Christian. Her caste assembly would temporarily excommunicate her taravād until she and her child had been driven out by their kāranavan and the woman's funeral rites had been performed. The woman, presumably with her child, might be executed by her matrilineal kinsmen or allowed to become a slave of the district chief or the king. If the woman and her lover were publicly exposed even before the birth of the child, both might be put to death.

A woman had no obligations to her husbands other than the granting of sexual privileges. Nayar husbands of the woman's own caste occasionally dined in her household but this was a favor and not a right. Nayar households sometimes provided uncooked food and a separate building for Brahman or chiefly husbands, but this again seems to have been a matter of courtesy rather than of obligation. Husbands of higher caste made the same gifts to their wives as did Nayar husbands.

In the nineteenth century her kāranavan selected a woman's first husband, and he may have done so at earlier periods. Until the 1930's many kāranavans also retained the right to dismiss a husband who displeased them. It seems improbable, however, that a woman or her kāranavan would ever refuse the visits of a Brahman, chief, or village headman of powerful standing in the community. In some cases also a husband of higher caste seems to have monopolized the favors of a Nayar woman, a privilege not accorded to men of her own caste. K. Kannan Nair reported (1908: 186) that until a century previously local chiefs sometimes compelled a woman to receive as husbands those of her enangar who wished to marry her. In general, however, women seem to have been free to reject particular men, and both men and women to terminate liaisons without formality.

In all possible respects attempts seem to have been made to reduce

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In all possible respects attempts seem to have been made to reduce the intensity of marital ties for the sake of the unity of taravād, village, and kingdom. Good men were men who devoted themselves first to the service of their feudal lords, and second to the welfare of their taravāds. Weak and immoral men were men who became inveigled by their wives and their children, so that they tried to make unnecessary gifts to their wives and neglected their taravāds. An ideal kāranavan was one who broke off his marital ties in old age and devoted his energies solely to his sisters' children. Institutional recognition of emotional attachments between spouses was reduced to a minimum. If a man by accident died in his wife's house his body was immediately brought home for cremation by his lineage kin. After a man's death his current wives were permitted to come and view his corpse. They were then ceremonially conducted out from the north side of the house—the side opposite to that from which the god of death had come. They must not look back at the house of death and they might never visit it again. They and their children took no part in the funeral or the subsequent anniversary rites nor did they observe death pollution.

In spite of the institutional precautions, undoubtedly some men formed strong emotional attachments to particular wives and their children. The institution of sorcery came into play at this point (Gough, 1958). Among Nayars, sorcery was practiced mainly against affines; it was ineffectual within the lineage. It was believed to be practiced most by junior members of a taravād against the matrilineal kin of their kāranavan's wife. The reason was that if he were particularly attached to a wife, the juniors of a kāranavan might fear that he would transfer to her gifts and cash which belonged legally to his taravād. They could not make their complaint in law, for the kāranavan was their legal representative. Instead, they are said to have secretly engaged low-caste practitioners to recite spells and make offerings to some minor malevolent deity with the object of bringing sickness upon the wife or her kin. If they suspected such evil doing, the members of the wife's taravād might in turn hire a "good" practitioner of their own who would appeal to some other deity to return the misfortune to the senders. It is clear that Nayars did hire "good" practitioners to perform countermagic against affines; whether in fact they hired evil practitioners to perform sorcery in the first place is uncertain. At all events the institution of sorcery provided a covert outlet for interpersonal hostilities between affines which could find no expression in open conflicts between their groups as a whole. The result of the hostilities was often termination of the

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particular marriage, for the spouses, unable to bear the machinations of their relatives, would often end their relationship.

I have called these Nayar institutions "marriage" because they limited and regulated sexual relationships and because they served to legitimize children. The provisions of both the tāli rite and the sambandham were directed toward these ends. The tāli rite was both a legal and a ritual institution. First, it symbolically conferred sexual and procreative powers upon the girl. The mock menstrual seclusion, the rites to the fertility goddess, and the "defloration" all indicate this. Second, it took the sexual rights in a girl away from her matrilineal kinsmen as soon as they had been conferred. This appears in that the girl and her elder matrilineal kinsmen must observe the rules of etiquette associated with incest prohibitions from the day of the tāli rite. Third, it transferred the sexual (but not the procreative) rights in the girl to a representative of her caste in the person of an enangan. Fourth, however, this man at once renounced his rights in his capacity as an individual, after which they became available to men of the caste, and of appropriate higher castes, as a group. All of this was accomplished in good time *before* the girl actually attained puberty and was capable of entering fruitfully into sexual liaisons. It was strictly forbidden for a man to have relations with a girl before her tāli rite, and if the rite was not performed before puberty she was expelled from caste.

With regard to the sambandham institution, sex relations were not promiscuous. They were forbidden within the lineage, within a certain range of affines (discussed below), and, most categorically, with men of lower caste. It was therefore necessary to have some procedure for legitimizing children, to show that they had been fathered by men standing in the appropriate roles. The legally obligatory payments by husbands at the time of birth accomplished this, and if no one could be found to make the payments, the woman and child were expelled from the caste.

It was appropriate that a woman should wear the tāli throughout her life and that she and her children should observe death pollution for the ritual husband rather than for any particular visiting husbands. For neither the ritual husband nor the visiting husbands had rights in the woman *as individuals*, nor had the woman or her children individual rights in them. After renouncing his individual rights, however, the ritual husband remained for life, in relation to this woman, the representative of his caste, which in law had collectively married her and collectively fathered her children.

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As a form of group marriage, the Nayar institutions clearly will not fit the definition of marriage proposed in *Notes and Queries in Anthropology*.[9] It did, however, legitimize children, which seems to me the minimum necessary criterion applicable to all those unions which anthropologists customarily label "marriage." As a new definition of marriage which will cover all the familiar types, the Nayar case, and several other unusual cases which are commonly recognized as marriage, I have suggested the following: "Marriage is a relationship between a woman and one or more other persons which provides that a child born to the woman, under circumstances not prohibited by the rules of the relationship, shall be accorded full birth-status rights in his society or social stratum" (Gough, 1959: 32).

Nayar men seem always to have chosen wives younger than themselves. A man ranked above his wife, who had to show respect to him. In the presence of her kin she remained standing before him and seldom spoke to him; she would not be seen talking to him in public outside her home. A woman never used her husband's name; she addressed and referred to him by plural honorific pronouns. Hypergamous marriage relationships were even more formal than those between Nayars. Caste rules of pollution prevented the husband from receiving food from his wife's kinsfolk. During the daytime, after taking his purifying bath in the morning, he was forbidden to touch her or any member of her family.

THE FATHER AND HIS KIN

The most peculiar characteristic of the Central Nayars is that although a form of marriage existed they did not institutionalize the elementary family of one man, one woman, and their children. This group was in no sense a legal, residential, commensal, productive, or distributive unit. An individual man had no legal rights in a particular wife and her children. He did not reside with them, did not eat regularly with them, did not produce with or for them, and he did not customarily distribute goods to his children. A woman had no legal rights in a particular man—only the right that one *or more* men admit paternity of her children. Similarly, a child correctly begotten was assured of legal paternity, but a group of men might fulfill this role and the child had no subsequent claims on any of them. It might perhaps be claimed that the group composed of the tāli tier, his ritual wife, and her children born subsequently received cere-

[9] "Marriage is a union between a man and a woman such that children born to the woman are the legitimate offspring of both parents" (*Notes and Queries*, 1951: 110).

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595 monial recognition through the performance of death pollution, but that was strictly all.

842 Nayars did, however, understand and attach significance to the physiological role of the male in procreation. They expected a child [829] to resemble his genitor and to be unusually intelligent if his father were a Brahman or a Nayar aristocrat. A man is said to have been 593 especially fond of a child whom he knew with reasonable certainty to be his own. He would make small gifts to him, play with him on visits, and offer him friendly counsel as he grew older. However, a man had no right to interfere in any way in his child's training, and [586] the child had no customary obligations to him. If he ended his relationship with the mother he had no further contact with the child.

Children addressed all their mothers' husbands as acchan, adding [601] the caste title in the case of a father of higher caste. Both boys and [564] girls stood in the father's presence and accorded him respect, but without the extreme submissiveness due to an older matrilineal kinsman. In spite of the Malayāli adage "No Nayar knows his father," it seems probable that almost every Nayar regarded some particular man as his genitor; but his relationship with this man might be anything from a permanent, warm attachment to almost total lack of recognition. Certainly differences of paternity created no institutionalized divisions within a sibling group.

602 No rights or obligations existed between an individual and his patrilateral kin. These relationships, when they existed, were a matter of individual friendliness or of polite etiquette. A person might visit his or her father's taravād as long as the father's marriage to the mother endured, especially if the father lived close by. How- [595] ever, although marriage has been monogamous for the past seventy to eighty years, I found in one Cochin village in 1949 that only 48 per cent of sibling groups containing children under fifteen had any contact with their father's matrilineal kin. In the other cases patrilateral relationships were suspended because the father lived at a distance, because he had divorced the mother, or because his kinswomen had quarreled with the mother.

[601] In what follows, the term "father" refers to any husband of the mother in the sambandham relationship, and the term "patrilateral kin," to the matrilineal kin of such a man.

Patrilateral kin of the father's generation or older were accorded [605] friendly respect. Cross cousins of the same sex and caste had a familiar, mildly joking relationship if they maintained contact with one another. If their families remained friendly, cross cousins of

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kinsmen and they avoided her except on ceremonial occasions. She had a relationship of mutual courtesy with all of her husband's older kinswomen and was given meticulous respect by her husband's junior kinsfolk of both sexes. The *ammāyi* (mother's brother's wife) and the *chēdatti amma* (elder brother's wife) play a role in Nayar jokes and folk tales somewhat comparable to that of the stepmother in Europe. As was mentioned in connection with witchcraft, junior members of a taravād habitually resented these women's hold over their husbands and represented them as grasping, unscrupulous, and intent on robbing their husbands' juniors. This fear of the mother's brother's wife was however much more pronounced in North Malabar, where marriage was monogamous or polygynous and residence avunculocal.

Co-wives and the wives of brothers, being in different houses, had no institutionalized relationships and apparently very little contact. The husbands of women of a property group also had only slight relationships. There was no structure of authority between them because they performed no activities together. The younger men accorded some deference to the older, but all might sit together informally and exchange news.

Virtually nothing is known of the relationships between co-husbands except the testimony of several writers from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries that they "agreed very well" with each other. They are said to have distributed the woman's time among them in a convenient manner "according as they can fix a term among themselves" (Hamilton, ed. Penzer, 1930, I: 172).

Among the Nayars of this area, households of the linked lineages or enangar fulfilled the customary obligations and carried out the ceremonial roles which were required of an individual's affinal or matrilateral kin in the patrilineal castes of Kerala. It was enangar who *must* take part in life-crisis rites, make gifts at first menstruation and marriage ceremonies, and come to assist at deaths. Enangar were of course often currently affines of the households in which they officiated, for sambandham relationships took place most intensively between lineages of the local caste group. However, the enangar relationship did not derive from particular sambandham ties nor was it brought about by particular tāli rites. It was rather a hereditary relationship of "perpetual affinity" between lineages as groups, which persisted irrespective of the making and breaking of particular sexual ties. When a man who happened to have sambandham with some woman of a household acted there in his role of enangan, he did so as a representative of his lineage, irrespective of his interpersonal mar-

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613 592 riage tie. Often, the particular persons who officiated as enangar did not happen to be currently having marital relations with any member of that house. This inter-group relationship of ceremonial obligation fitted the fact that particular marital ties were too transient and slender to carry the normal obligations of affinity.

Prerequisites of the Kinship System of Commoners

595 175 It is not definitely known how the institutions of group marriage and linked lineages arose among Central Kerala Nayars. In 1518 Barbosa, writing of the Nayars of Calicut, stated of group marriage: "And it is said that the kings made this law, in order that the Nayars should not be covetous and should not abandon the king's service" (Dames, 1921: 124). Similarly João de Barros wrote at about the same period: "They say that this (polyandry) is a very ancient law among them, and that it springs from the wish of a certain king to relieve the men of the burden of maintaining sons, and leave them ready for warlike [671] service whensoever the king calls upon them" (*ibid.*: 241). Whether or not group marriage was instituted by a particular royal edict, we know that once it had begun it was enforceable by the laws of the Central kingdoms. Thus, according to at least one authority, a chief could compel a woman to receive as marital partners any of her en- [613] angar who wished to visit her (K. Kannan Nair, 1908: 186). The rights and duties of enangar in the administration of caste law were also sanctioned by the chief and, ultimately, by the king.

595 175 184 Considerable literary evidence suggests that a form of group marriage similar to that of Central Kerala existed among Nayars in at least some of the chiefdoms of the kingdom of Travancore in Southern Kerala. K. M. Panikkar, it is true, has argued that Travancore Nayar women were never polyandrous (1918: 270–271). Other Malabari writers, however, responding to Panikkar's statement, have argued convincingly that they were (Aiyappan, 1932*a*, 1932*b*, 1934; Iyer, 1932). K. P. Padmanabha Menon, in particular, supports the view that traditionally Nayar women in both Central and Southern Kerala were "held in common, every woman belonging to all the members of the tribe, and resistance to any of them was severely punished." In support he quotes two early statements concerning the chiefdom of Venmani, with its capital of Kartigapally, in North Travancore. Thus the Portuguese Archbishop Menezes in the mid-sixteenth century reported that "the king of Kartigapally enacted that in his kingdom any Nair was at liberty to be free with any woman of the caste high or low, and that he could kill a woman, with impunity, if she refuses

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a favor"; and the Dutch Captain Nieuhoff observed in 1664 that "It is commonly reported in these parts, that the kings of Venmani made a law, by which a man was empowered to kill any woman that should refuse him a kindness" (quoted in K. P. P. Menon, 1908: vii–viii). These quotations are especially interesting because they suggest that, in Travancore as in Central Kerala, plural unions on the part of women were not merely permissible but, in theory at least, enforceable by law.

Similarly, Nayar informants of a village near Haripad in Central Travancore told me that they understood that "long ago" Nayars of Travancore had the institution of the visiting husband together with polygyny and non-fraternal polyandry, like Central Kerala Nayars. The same informants reported that during the nineteenth century, after the Nayar armies were disbanded, residence became avunculocal among Nayars in this area of Travancore, non-fraternal polyandry died out, and for a few decades some Nayars practised fraternal polyandry, with a group of brothers assuming collective responsibility for one or more co-resident wives and their young children. Other writers also mention relatively modern cases of fraternal polyandry among Travancore Nayars (Iyer, 1932; Fawcett, 1901: 241). Later in the nineteenth century and during this century, however, Travancore matrilineal property groups began to disintegrate, and fraternal polyandry gave place to monogamy. The Central Travancore sequence of duolocality with group marriage, to avunculocality with fraternal polyandry, to partial neolocality with monogamy, is an interesting one in view of the fact that fraternal polyandry has, as far as I am aware, always been strictly forbidden among both duolocal Nayars of Central Kerala and avunculocal Nayars of North Kerala throughout the historical period. I was able to spend only a fortnight in Travancore and could not pursue the comparison.

The marriage of a woman to more than one man concurrently is not confined to the Nayars in southwest India. The double unilineal Tiyyars and some other higher polluting castes of Central Kerala had fraternal polyandry, and both fraternal and non-fraternal polyandry were customary among the Toda tribe of the Nilgiri hills. The Coorgs to the east of North Kerala are also said to have had fraternal polyandry associated with patrilineal descent groups. The prevalence of various types of polyandry in southwest India generally suggests that *some* form of plural unions for women may have been very ancient among the Nayars, possibly predating their organization into kingdoms.

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595 182 701 [566] Leaving aside the problem of origins, however, what I would argue is that the *specific* form of group marriage evolved among Central Kerala Nayars in the period of the native kingdoms was particularly adapted to their military organization, which in turn was made possible by the existence of the lower castes of sub-tenants and serfs. The work of the tenants and serfs absolved Nayar men from the duty of maintaining the women and children of either their natal or their conjugal units by their own productive activities. It set free most of these men for a lifetime of military service; in each matrilineal group only one old man was needed at home to organize the work of the household's retainers. Given matrilineal descent and inheritance, and given the mobility of men and the absence of male economic obligations to kinswomen, there was no reason why either men or women should restrict themselves to particular spouses. There was also, as the early European writers realized, a positive value for the kingdom in their not doing so, for plural marriages discouraged soldiers from forming deep attachments to particular wives and children, and encouraged them to focus their loyalty on military leaders and on the matrilineal groups through which they were recruited. At the same time, plural marriages provided the soldiers with ready comforts and a night's lodging both in their own villages and in other villages of the kingdom through which they might pass. Whether or not chiefs regularly enforced indiscriminate mating among Nayar women of their districts in order to strengthen their soldiers' allegiances, a system of group marriage involving optional multiple alliances certainly fitted the way of life of a landed militia, already (for historical reasons) [178] organized into matrilineal descent groups. A close connection between group marriage and the military organization is further suggested in that, after the British had disbanded the armies in about 1800, although matrilineal descent persisted for over a century, group marriage rapidly died out. Within about thirty years monogamous marriage in Central Kerala, and monogamous or restricted, fraternally polyandrous marriage in Travancore, had become common, and fathers had assumed a definite role in the upbringing of their children.

Kinship in the Aristocratic Matrilineal Castes

THE LINEAGE

613 592 423 Among the retainer Nayars a household whose membership rose above about thirty tended to divide its property between its segments when the senior males who had spanned the segments were dead. Correspondingly, lineages and clans of retainer Nayars went through a grad-

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613 597 eage with which one was neither at enmity nor in regular asymmetrical political relationships. Thus the Travancore royal lineage several times adopted from Kolattiri, at the other end of Kerala, and the Calicut lineage from Nileswaram, the northernmost independent chiefdom of the Malabar Coast.

613 262 564 The giving and receiving of food, normally a hallmark of caste ranking, presented other problems. Some royal lineages were vegetarians and employed Nambudiri Brahman cooks who, being ritually higher than themselves, were permitted to serve them with food. Others seem to have drawn to themselves a small group of lineages as cooks and houseservants upon whom they conferred equivalence of caste rank, while maintaining them as their social inferiors and not intermarrying with them.

613 RESIDENCE AND KINSHIP RELATIONSHIPS

592 593 554 The property groups of village headmen's and chiefly lineages had residential arrangements similar to those of retainer Nayars, except that their houses were larger. The men of these groups visited their lower-ranking wives in the latters' homes. If they lived nearby, visits would occur at night; if at a distance, the husband might visit his wife about once a month and remain for two or three days. Similarly, women of these groups received visits from their higher-ranking husbands at convenient intervals. If he came from a distance the husband brought his own servants and cook, occupied a building near the taravād house, and stayed at his conjugal family's expense.

613 344 554 592 In the royal lineages each property group occupied a large palace. Within it each princess had her own suite of rooms in company with her children under the age of fifteen. Princes over this age had private rooms in a separate wing. The Nambudiri Brahman husbands of princesses (who were younger sons in their own households and had no managerial duties) lived at the palace for the duration of their marriages and were maintained at its expense. In the daytime they occupied a building within the royal courtyard, with its own bathing pool, kitchen, and servants, and visited their wives' rooms mainly at night. Junior princes visited their wives in nearby retainers' households or in more distant chiefly taravāds. Each royal sthāni had his own palace, estate, and retainers for the duration of his office. He would normally bequeath a house to a Nayar wife within the palace grounds and visit her and his children there.

595 554 [586] Although group marriage appears to have existed in theory among aristocrats, polyandry was in fact perhaps less common than among retainer Nayars. Princesses are said to have been sometimes poly-

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androus and divorce was freely practiced, but a princess probably did not regularly entertain more than one husband at a time. Older Nambudiri Brahman husbands often introduced their own younger kinsmen into the palace; for this reason both matrilateral cross-cousin marriage and paternal parallel-cousin marriage were common in Brahman-royal unions. Princes, chiefs, and high-ranking Nambudiri Brahmans were sometimes polygynous. Their wives, however, were probably seldom polyandrous; for aristocrats seem often to have exercised the power to monopolize the attentions of their favorite Nayar wives. They were therefore more sure of the paternity of their Nayar sons, upon whom they sometimes conferred military or political offices.

In all hypergamous unions the husband observed the normal all-India caste rules of pollution except with regard to sexual intercourse. He might not receive food from his wife's caste and had little communication with her or her children in the daytime. Affinal relationships were correspondingly more restricted than in the retainer castes, for a woman had very little communication with her husband's natal kin; she and her children used no kinship terms for them. If the wife was of lower social as well as ritual rank than the husband she did not visit his natal home. Conversely, princesses do not seem to have demeaned themselves socially by visiting the homes of their ritually higher-ranking husbands. A Nayar wife who was of similar social rank to her Brahman or temple-servant husband might occasionally visit the womenfolk of his home, but she was received in an outbuilding and might not eat with them. Similarly, husbands in hypergamous unions had highly formalized and restricted relationships with the matrilineal kinsmen of their wives. The wives' elder kinsmen were accorded the respect due their age; the husband, that due his superior ritual rank.

Relationships between matrilineal kin among the aristocrats were a sharpened version of those found among retainer Nayars. Between men, the etiquette associated with age rank was highly stereotyped. Among the senior princes who were likely to compete for political office it reached the point of avoidance, a condition facilitated by their separate residences as sthānis. The etiquette of respect was similarly elaborated between men and women. After the age of fifteen a prince might converse with older women of his palace only by appointment and in some public place. He must scrupulously avoid the presence of younger kinswomen from the time of their *tāli* rite. In the potentially larger property groups of the aristocrats these rules of etiquette obviously militated against the expression of aggression between men as well as preventing incestuous relations between the sexes.

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terms. When one of these terms applies to more than one relative the equation issues simply from the equation of the matrilineal kin who are their spouses.

There was a lack of terms for affines younger than ego because unless sex difference caused ego to avoid them completely, the principle of age rank made it possible to address them by name. Descriptive compound terms were adequate to refer to them.

However, the existence of the special reciprocal reference term between brothers-in-law points up the uniqueness of the brother-sister tie and the fact that a woman's brothers and her husband were brought into a specially close relationship by virtue of their claims upon the woman who linked them.

The use of B3 as a collective term reflects the fact that, as sex partners and fathers, these men had a common interest in ego's matrilineal group and it in them.

MODERN CHANGES

Since about 1890, as I have described elsewhere (Gough, 1952), Nayar marriage has become monogamous and men have assumed rights in and obligations to their children. The matrilineage is gradually disintegrating and the elementary family is gradually emerging as the key group in a system of bilateral, interpersonal kinship ties.

As a result of these changes, terms formerly restricted to matrilateral kin are today sometimes used to address corresponding patrilateral kin, although this usage is not yet standardized. The most common equations are MoMo = FaMo, MoMoBr = FaMoBr, MoFa = FaFa, MoBr = FaBr, MoSi = FaSi, MoBrWi = FaBrWi, and MoSiHu = FaSiHu. Cross cousins and paternal parallel cousins still have no reference terms but if older are addressed as siblings. No other regular changes are observable for kin of ego's or ascending generations, and no regular changes have occurred in terms for descending generations.

As the system now stands, therefore, ego's matrilineal kin of the same sex are still merged within each generation, but the transferences to patrilateral kin have created a mixture between "lineal" and "generation" systems in the sense of Murdock and earlier writers, as far as the own and ascending generations are concerned (Murdock, 1949: 149). A "generation" classification is used for both sexes of ego's generation, with all cousins equated with siblings. A "generation" classification is also used for women of the first ascending generation, if we discount the age prefixes used to differentiate older and younger sisters of the parents. If we classify the age prefixes as constituting sep-

3:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 AWll Kerala AWll
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matrilocally in a home with the wife's mother and sometimes with others of her older matrilineal kin. Twenty-six couples (49 per cent) lived neolocally in a house provided by the husband and containing no natal kin of either husband or wife. Of these 26 neolocally resident couples, 6 (11 per cent) lived in a house which the husband had inherited from his dead father; 3 (6 per cent of the total) lived in a house which the husband had obtained from his taravād; 14 (26 per cent) lived in a house newly built by the husband for his wife.

These figures may be contrasted with the modern picture in a Central Kerala village, where the marketability of land and labor have also brought about a partial disintegration of matrilineal descent groups and an emergence of the elementary family as a residential and economic unit. Both in Central and in North Kerala, moreover, marriage has been compulsorily monogamous since the 1930's, men have been legally obliged to maintain their wives and children, and the whole of man's private intestate property has passed to his mother, wife, and children at his death (Madras *Marumakkattāyam* Act, 1933; Cochin Nayar Act, 1938; Nair, 1941: 308). In addition, it has now become legally possible for the members of a taravād to divide their matrilineal ancestral property on a per capita basis. Once the ancestral property has been divided into individual shares in this way it becomes private property in law and is heritable in the same manner as are self-acquisitions. Both in Central and North Kerala, therefore, economic change and resultant modern laws have combined to break down traditional matrilineal descent groups.

In Central Kerala, however, population is denser and there has been less waste land available for individual cultivation. Over the past hundred years, therefore, when individual men have acquired private plots, it has more often been through purchase of already cultivated land than through cultivation of virgin land. Further, Nayar men in Central Kerala, having been a professional militia, tended after the disbanding of their armies either to remain non-cultivating owners and tenants or where possible to move into new forms of salaried employment. Central Kerala today is more urbanized than is North Kerala, so that a much greater proportion of Nayars have salaried work in factories, as clerks, as government servants, as schoolteachers, or in the armed services. Many are unemployed and merely live from their ancestral lands. Particularly among retainer Nayars, who are relatively poor, men have amassed less self-acquired land than was possible for Nayar cultivators in North Kerala. Moreover, because Nayar men are often not themselves the cultivators of

3:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 AWll Kerala AWll
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and her children were not illegitimate unless she had relations with a man of low caste.

A woman normally lived with her husband in his ancestral home or in a separate house on his ancestral land. He then owed her physical protection and at least a part of her food and clothing, in return for limited domestic services. Occasionally a man might choose to visit his wife in her ancestral home if she lived nearby. In this case he might work on her ancestral land or bring periodic provisions of grain and clothing to her and her children. He would eat sometimes in his ancestral house and sometimes in the house of his wife. In all marriages a husband was obliged to pay the full expenses of delivery when his wife bore a child in her ancestral home and, additionally, to supply grain and other food to her throughout the six months which she spent in her taravād at this time.

A woman owed respect and obedience to her husband. He had the right to scold or even to beat her if she disregarded his wishes. Polygyny was permitted and was fairly common among village headmen, chiefs, and royalty. The polygynous husband usually provided separate houses for his wives on his ancestral estate.

Theoretically, either party might divorce the other at will, but in fact it was usually the husband who initiated a divorce. We do not know how common divorce was in the traditional period. At present it is rare in wealthy landowning lineages, although it probably takes place rather more frequently than among aristocratic Mappillas of North Kerala. It is more usual among the poorer Nambiar commoners, although probably less frequent than among the poorer Tiyyars of this area.

Widows might remarry freely by traditional law. Today it is somewhat rare for a widow to remarry if she has children under the age of three or four; we do not know whether this was the case traditionally. A widow who does remarry almost invariably leaves her children by the first marriage behind in her taravād, in the care of her mother or some other older natal kinswomen. Such children may visit their mother in their stepfather's house but they have no customary rights of maintenance there, and it is considered that their own taravād is the correct place for them to live.

Thus in North Kerala, by contrast with Central Kerala, differences of paternity may create structural divisions among the children born of one mother. All are of the same taravād and share the same fundamental birth-status rights, but if their fathers were different they

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CULTS OF THE DEAD AMONG THE NĀYARS

By E. Kathleen Gough

121 IN this paper I shall attempt both a sociological and a psychological analysis of Nāyar cults of the dead. That is to say, I shall try to relate the role-structure and social functions of the cults to those of legal and economic institutions, and to relate the emotional content of the cults to that of certain relationships among the living.

613 The Nāyars[1] are a high, matrilineal caste of landholders and salaried workers.
564 Some four to seven matrilineal lineages of commoner Nāyars traditionally occupied
101 the high caste area of a village. They served a Nāyar or Nambūdiri Brahman village headman, and had authority over tenants, artisans, and serfs of lower caste. The lineage was exogamous, had a depth of about ten to fifteen generations and was concerned in village government. But the more significant economic unit was a lineage segment (*taravād*), whose members jointly owned property including an ancestral house. The eldest man of this group was its legal guardian (*kāranavan*).

635 Before British rule began in 1792, the Malabar Coast comprised a number of
175 kingdoms. I am concerned with Nāyars of villages in the former Cochin kingdom,
121 in the center of the coast, and with those of villages in the former Kottayam kingdom in the north.

In Cochin, the country was relatively flat, fertile, and densely populated. The
105 Nāyars were the professional military caste. For a part of each year they tended to be
184 absent from the village in military training or war. Women remained on their ancestral
[133] estates under the legal guardianship of the *kāranavan* and were maintained by the
[595] work of tenants and serfs. Probably largely as a result of the relatively mobile military occupation of the men, plural marital unions were customary. A woman might have six or eight husbands of her own or a higher subcaste, and a man, any number of
[591] Nāyar wives of his own or a lower subcaste. Residence was duolocal: spouses lived separately in their natal homes and a husband visited his wife in her home at night.
[951] Exact physiological paternity was, clearly, often unknown, and in any case a man had
[594] no rights in nor obligations to his children. Among Nāyars of this area, therefore, contrary to Murdock's generalization,[2] the elementary family was not institutionalized
[114] as a legal, economic or residential unit.

In Kottayam, the terrain was mountainous and jungly, the area more sparsely
[133] populated, and the kingdom less centralized. The Nāyars were cultivating landowners
[591] and only occasional warriors. The hilly and jungly terrain and the sparsity of population made duolocal residence impracticable. In most cases a man took his wife to live in his ancestral household in avunculocal residence, and children were brought up until
[595] adolescence in the houses of their fathers. There was some polygyny, but polyandry was forbidden. Fathers had morally, though not legally recognized rights in and

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
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The times have changed things a little: a little only because after all the change is on the surface: it is not radical. Now-a-days, when there is a penal code to deal with persons who kill others, the Nâyar cannot keep a concubine of a caste (not a clan) lower than his own without fear of social ex-communication. The killing, except perhaps now and then *sub rosâ*, is a thing of the past.

The custom which permits the woman to cohabit with a man, her equal or superior in caste, has been alluded to more than once. I will now make some use of the (Government) Report of the Malabar Marriage Commission, published in 1894, which contains much information which is extremely valuable to the anthropologist and the folklorist, and none the worse for being found together with views and opinions with which he cannot agree. One of the points to which the Commission directed special attention was "as to the customs connected with Hindu marriages in Malabar" and the evidence collected respecting these may be accepted as correct, and the delineation of existing custom may be taken as authoritative. Now the custom which permits the man to cohabit with a woman lower in the social scale than himself prohibits the woman from exercising the same liberty. "This is called the rule of *Anulómam* and *Pratilómam*. Dr. Gundert derives *Anulómam* from *anu* = with + *lómam* = *rómam* = the hair: going with the hair or grain. So *Pratilómam* means "going against the hair or grain." According to this usage a Nâyar woman, consorting with a man of a higher caste follows the hair, purifies the blood, and raises the progeny in social estimation. By cohabitation with a man of a lower division (clan) or caste, she is guily of *Pratilómam*; and, if the difference of caste were admittedly great, she would be turned out of her family to prevent the whole family being boycotted."

A corollary of this custom is that a Nambûtiri Brâhman father cannot touch his own children by his Nâyar consort without bathing afterwards to remove the pollution. The children in the Marumakkattâyam family belong, of course, to their mother's family, clan, caste. They are Nâyars, not Nambûtiris; so the Nambûtiri cannot touch them without pollution.

The rule of *Anulómam* and *Pratilómam* appears to be observed with the utmost strictness and thoroughness; one finds it obtaining between members of the same clan inhabiting different parts of the country. Mention of this

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
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astrologer is requisitioned, and, on the day he fixes, two or three of the women go to the house of the girl-wife, the Ammâyi as they call her (literally "uncle's wife"). They are well treated, and presently bring away the girl with them. As she is about to enter the gate house of her husband's Taravâd, the stile of which she crosses right leg first, two or three of the women meet her, bearing a burning lamp and a brass plate (tâlam) and precede her to the nalukattu of the house. There she is seated on a mat, and a burning lamp and a nazhi (1 measure) of rice and some plantains are placed before her. One of the younger women [married or not I cannot say] takes up a plantain and puts a piece of it in the Ammâyi's mouth; a little ceremony called Madhuram Tital, or giving the sweets for eating. She lives in her husband's house for a few days and is then sent back to her own with presents, bracelets, rings or cloths, gifts of the senior women of the house. After this she is at liberty to visit her husband's house on any day, auspicious or inauspicious.

"In a big Taravâd, where there are many women, the Ammâyi does not, as a rule, disperse sympathy and good will in the household, and if she happens to live temporarily in her husband's house, as is sometimes though very rarely the case in south Malabar, and to be the wife of the Kâranavan, it is observed that she gets, more than her share of whatever good things may be going; hence the proverb 'Ammâyi Ammayê Kallinmel Vechchittu Mattoru Kallu Kondu Nârâyana'—'Place Ammâyi Amma on a stone and grind her with another stone.'"

Yet one more extract—a reference taken from my notes. The Rev. S. Mateer, author of a well-known book on Travancore, where he resided something over a quarter of a century I think, informed me ten years ago—he was speaking of polyandry amongst the Nâyars of Travancore—that he had "known an instance of 6 brothers keeping 2 women, 4 husbands to one, and 2 to the other. In a case where 2 brothers cohabited with one woman and one was converted to Christianity, the other brother was indignant at the Christian's refusal to live any longer in this condition." I have not known an admitted instance of polyandry amongst the Nâyars of Malabar at the present day, but there is no doubt that if it does not exist now (and I think it does here and there),

595 it certainly did not long ago. Polyandry exists amongst other castes, as we shall see by and by.

58 We must now leave the subject of marriage, which, 611 simple though it is, is like most simple things extremely difficult to describe. The marital relation of the Nâyar is a very natural and simple affair; yet it is the *point d'appuis* of that system of inheritance through women which was once much more common than it is now.

804 Let us hope it will remain unchanged, and that the Nâyar will be able to say always (in his own tongue), with more regard for concrete truth than poetic insight "Das ewig' weibliche ziet uns hinan."

BIRTH: ANTE-NATAL AND AFTER CEREMONIES.

843 The following very interesting note on the ceremonies connected with birth, those preceding it as well as those following it, has been very kindly given by Mr. U. Balakrishnan Nâyar; so I quote his own words:—

"A Nâyar woman has to observe certain ceremonies during pregnancy. First, during and after the seventh [564] month of pregnancy, she (at least, among the well-to-do [184] class) bathes, and worships in the temple, every morning; and eats before her morning meal, a small quantity of butter over which holy *mantrams* have been said by the temple priest or by Nambûtiris. This is generally done till delivery.

843 "*Puli-kuti.*—Another and even more important cere- 613 mony during pregnancy is the *puli-kuti* (lit., drinking tamarind juice). This is an indispensable ceremony, per- [787] formed by the rich and poor alike, on a particular day in the ninth month. The day, nay, even the very hour is [824] fixed by the local astrologer. The ceremony begins by the planting of a twig of the *ampasham* tree, on the morning of the day of the ceremony, in the principal courtyard *(natu-muttom)* of the *Taravâd*. At the appointed hour or *muhurtam*, the pregnant woman, after having bathed and properly attired, is conducted to a particular portion of the house (*vatakini* or northern wing), where she is seated, facing eastwards. The *Ammâyi* or 'uncle's wife,' whose presence on the occasion is essential, goes to the courtyard and plucking a few leaves of the planted twig, squeezes a few drops of its juice into a cup. This she hands over to the brother, if any, of the pregnant woman. It is necessary that the brother should wear a gold ring on his right-hand ring finger. Holding a

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949) 1955 AWll Kerala AWll
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royal lineage. The retainer sub-castes disputed for rank and, in their separate villages, held the same rights of administration over the lower castes. In all these sub-castes, including the royal lineage, men were trained from the age of seven as soldiers in village gymnasia headed by military leaders (Asāns), and formed a permanent, mobile militia of the kingdom. Below the retainer sub-castes in rank came the small, non-military Nayar servant sub-castes of oil-mongers, funeral-priests, washermen, and barbers.[1] Quite apart from these Brahman and Nayar sub-castes, in a separate area of the village lived the lower patrilineal castes of tenants and menials and the lowest, 'exterior' castes of serfs.

The Nayar Kinship System. The Nayar lineage (*taravāḍ*) is exogamous and matrilineal kinship terms are extended throughout its range. Its members are united by the observance of fifteen days' ritual pollution at a birth or death, and traditionally by worship of the spirits of dead heads of the lineage, and of a group of totemic snakes. The lineage is divided into small segments, which I call property-groups, each three to five generations deep. Each group is headed by its eldest man (*kāraṇavan*) who is the legal guardian of its members and controls their property.

The property-group was also until recently the dwelling-group. Residence was, and is still in some houses, uxorilocal: a husband visits his wife after supper and leaves before breakfast. Traditionally, a woman might have any number of lovers of appropriate sub-caste, and a man any number of mistresses. This custom of combined polyandrous and polygynous unions, besides being consistent with a strong matrilineal lineage system, was almost certainly associated with the occupation of Nayar men as soldiers, since it began to die out shortly after the armies were disbanded, about 1810, and a hundred years before the lineage showed signs of disintegration.

The rules of mating were as follows. Sex relations were prohibited within the lineage, and with more than one man or one woman of the same lineage. The Nayar servant sub-castes of oil-mongers, funeral-priests, washermen, and barbers were endogamous, as were all the lower patrilineal castes and the serf-castes. Within the range of military and ruling sub-castes (except for the royal lineages which admitted no peers), all unions were permissible outside the lineage and the range of prohibited affines, and within the sub-caste. Furthermore, these sub-castes were knit together by 'hypergamous' unions between women of lower and men of higher sub-caste. Members of the three retainer sub-castes, which disputed for rank, had only temporary and sporadic sex-relations across sub-caste boundaries. These took place during war when soldiers were permitted to contravene the normal rules against dining with or touching members of other retainer sub-castes and might enter each others' houses in order to eat and sleep. More permanent relationships were encouraged between women of the retainer sub-castes and Kiriyattil, Sāmantan, royal, or Nambūdiri men; between Kiriyattil women and Sāmantan, royal, or Nambūdiri men; between Sāmantan women and royal or Nambūdiri men; and between royal women and Nambūdiri men. The royal lineages, acknowledging no others as peers, were obliged to marry all their women upwards and all their men downwards. The Walluvanād and Cochin princesses married Nambūdiri men, the princes Sāmantan, Kiriyattil, or retainer-women. The Zamorins at first married only some of their women to Nambūdiris, and the rest to men of the more ancient royal lineages of Beypore, Bettem, and Kodungalur, all of whom had been conquered by the Zamorins and made honoured vassals in their kingdom. At some time in the 18th century, the Zamorin's lineage gave up this practice and began to marry its women only to Nambūdiris, while continuing to marry its men to Sāmantan, Kiriyattil, and retainer-Nayar women.

[1] Respectively called Vettukads, Attikurisis (Chidigans in Cochin), Veluthedans, and Vilakkatalavans. The small temple-servant castes who rank between Nambūdiris and Nayars and were also concerned in hypergamous marriages are for lack of space excluded from this discussion.

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564 582 421 Among Nambûdiris only the eldest son of the patrilineal family might take one or more wives from his caste and beget children for his family. Younger sons might form liaisons only with Nayar women, their children being Nayar by matrilineal descent. Nambûdiri younger sons, like unmarried Nambûdiri women (of whom there were many), had rights to maintenance from the ancestral estate but might not divide the property. These customs ensured the stability of the Nambûdiri estate by preventing it from increasing in numbers and splitting into segments.

595 [833] [431] [843] [851] [431] In all the matrilineal castes the husband, whether alone or of a group, had none but sexual rights in his wife and few economic obligations. Sex-relations were called *sambandham* ('joining together'), and were initiated without religious rites. On his first visit the lover customarily presented the woman with a loin-cloth before her matrilineal kin. He might also place a sovereign under the pillow before leaving next morning, but neither gift was obligatory. When a woman became pregnant, she must name one or more men of appropriate sub-caste as possible fathers: this vindicated her from the charge of cohabitation with a low-caste man. The men named must jointly meet the expenses of her delivery; their payment of this sum to the barber-midwife was a public acknowledgment that the child had been licitly begotten by a man of correct sub-caste. In addition, her lovers provided a woman with bathing-oil, clothing, and ceremonial gifts of vegetables at the three main festivals of the year. These payments were a sign of their continued association with her. Beyond this, a lover had no obligations to his mistress; either of them might stop cohabitation at will.

595 851 601 564 [613] With polyandrous unions, the physiological fatherhood of a child was often unknown. Even when known, the father had no rights in nor obligations to his children. All the current lovers of the mother were called *acchan* (father) but kinship terms were not extended to their lineage-kin. Though he might play with his children, the father might not dispute their *kāraṇa:an*'s authority. In hypergamous unions, the higher caste father might not eat in the house of his mistress, and, after taking a bath in the morning, might not touch her nor her children.

613 588 [881] *The Nayar* Tāli-*Rite.* Though the first *sambandham* of a girl began without ceremony shortly before or after puberty, she must before puberty go through the *tālikettukalyānam.* This was collectively conducted by the lineage every ten to twelve years for all its immature girls. If a girl matured before the rite was performed, she must theoretically be cast out by her lineage and banished from her village. In fact, my informants said that in this event, the first menstruation (normally marked by public rites) would be kept secret by the lineage until after the *tāli*-rite could be performed.

The central rite of this ceremony was, as in the ordinary marriage of Tamil patrilineal castes and of the Nambûdiris, the tying of a gold ornament (*tāli*) strung on a thread of white silk, round the neck of the girl by a ritual bridegroom (*manavalan*).

613 621 564 In the retainer sub-castes the Nayar lineages of a village, or in some cases of a group of villages, formed a local sub-caste group (*tara*). Each lineage was linked by ties of ritual co-operation to two or more other lineages of the group. These linked lineages were called *enangar. Enangar* relations were reciprocal but not exclusive, so that in a group of eight lineages, lineage A might be *enangar* to B, C, D, and F; B to A, E, and F; C to A, H, and G; E to B, H, and G; F only to A and B; and H to E, D, and C. A chain of *enangar* relationships thus indirectly linked all lineages of the local sub-caste group. *Enangar* lineages must send representatives to ceremonies of the linked lineage, e.g. the termination of birth and death pollutions and the first menstruation of a girl. *Enangar* must also take note of breaches of caste law by members of their linked lineages and report such culprits for trial by the *tara* assembly. [692] They were thus the formal links between a lineage and its assembly: they represented the 613 local sub-caste group (called the *enangu*) to the individual lineages. In ceremonies, they played

588 [564] [793] marriage rite. At the auspicious time, each girl was led in turn by her brother from the house and seated on the plank. At a sign from the astrologer, the Brahman priest (called Elayad, a low sub-caste of Nambûdiris who officiate at Nayar funerals) handed the *tâli* to the bridegroom, who tied it round the girl's neck. The nineteen couples were then secluded in the house for the remaining three days and nights of the rites. Informants said that in modern times when lineages were often large, the couples numerous and the girls sometimes infants, cohabitation would be unlikely. It was not, however, forbidden, and appears formerly to have been required. It is clear that the rite was ritually if not actually a defloration ceremony, as is indicated by the saying *Tâli kettiu amma âyi* ('having had the *tâli* tied, a girl becomes a [married] woman').

588 782 787 793 Next morning the party reassembled without the couples, and offerings to Bhagavadi took place. The participants were a Sûdra Nayar oracle (*velichchappâd*), a Vattekad (oil-monger) Nayar sacrificial priest, and a Nayar boy who accompanied the oracle, carrying a staff to the top of which was tied a brush of coconut flowers. These officiants perform similarly by hereditary right at the annual Bhagavadi temple festival. The priest offered rice, paddy, coconuts, incense, a burning lamp, and toddy before the branch of the milk-tree, following which he sacrificed a cock and poured out a vessel of red blood-like liquid. The oracle then donned a waist-band and anklets of bells and took a sickle in his hand. (These symbolize the power of Bhagavadi: when he dons them it is believed that she enters and possesses the oracle.) Accompanied by loud music, he leapt wildly in the air, shouting hoarsely and chopping his forehead with the sickle till blood flowed down. In this frenzy he called out to the host *kâranavar* that the goddess was appeased by his offerings. His possession then subsided and his insignia were removed.

796 [831] Bhagavadi is the Malabar goddess of war, smallpox, and the soil. Her idol, in the Nayar village temple, is a hollow cylindrical stone, a symbol of the vagina, as the Brahmanical idol of Siva is the lingam, a symbol of the phallus. Bhagavadi is also worshipped as the oracle's sickle, as a picture drawn in chalks on the floor, as the milk-tree (*Alstonia scholaris*), and as the [753] ancestral sword of a Nayar lineage. She is believed to have protected the Nayars in war. She is fierce and vengeful, her chief power being to inflict smallpox. She is propitiated by similar [782] rites during smallpox epidemics, on the sixteenth day after a smallpox death, and on the last [834] night of her annual temple festival, during which she is angry with the villagers who must observe sexual continence.

588 [783] [264] The remainder of the second day, and the third day, were devoted to feasting and music. On the fourth morning each couple went to the village bathing pool where, hand-in-hand, they took a purifying plunge-bath. Then, decked in fine clothes, they returned to the lineage house. In the kitchen each couple ate a meal from the same loaf. The company was then fed, but on this day, alone of all days, women ate before men. The bridegrooms received clothing and foodstuffs from the *kâranavar* and departed for their respective homes.

588 184 595 [765] [783] [851] In Pâlakkara the *tâli*-tier might remain with his bride as her first *sambandham* lover. At the last *tâli*-rite two of the nineteen bridegrooms remained in association with their brides, though one abandoned his shortly afterwards. The other seventeen girls formed unions with other men of the village shortly after puberty. In all *tâli*-rites in this area, however, the 'bridegroom' remained the ritual husband of his 'bride' throughout his life, though he need never visit her again. At his death, the 'wife', together with her children by whatever physiological father, must observe fifteen days' pollution. Death pollution was otherwise traditionally observed only for matrilineal kin: not until recently was it observed for the *sambandham* lover and the physiological father. The *tâli*-tier of a woman was regarded, moreover, as the ritual father of her children. If they knew him, the children called this man *appan* (the Tamil word for 'father', used for the *genitor* by Tiyyars and Christians) as distinct from *acchan* (originally

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a Sanskrit word meaning 'the noble one') the Malayalam word used by Nayars for the *genitor* and all lovers of the mother. The *appan* had no obligations to nor rights in a child except that, at his death, the child observed pollution. Nevertheless, Pālakkara informants stressed that the *appan* was a child's 'real father', as the *tāli*-rite was a woman's 'real marriage'.

In Walluvanād and Calicut a different custom prevailed. After the final feast, the couples repaired to the marriage shed, where each ritual bridegroom tore in two the loin-cloth which had been worn during the three days of seclusion by his bride, retaining one half and handing the other to the girl. This ritual divorce indicated that the bride, though still in the status of a married woman, was now free to cohabit with whom she wished. She might however still take as lover the bridegroom who had divorced her. In spite of the 'divorce', the bride and her children observed pollution at the death of the bridegroom. In those lineages where the *tāli* was tied by a man of higher sub-caste, no cloth was severed after the rite, but the bridegroom, being an elderly man, was unlikely to cohabit with the girl again. However, she must, with her children, observe pollution at his death.

At some periods and in some areas of South Malabar and Cochin it seems that the ritual bridegroom was forbidden to enter into *sambandham* with his bride. In 1510 Barbosa stated that the *tāli*-tier was sometimes a 'relation' of the girl, and in this case, when he had tied the *tāli*, he must go away 'without touching her nor more to say to her on account of being her relation'. If, however, he was not a 'relation', 'he may remain with her if he wish it, but he is not bound to do so if he do not desire it' (*ibid.* p. 124). Unfortunately, Barbosa did not define the categories of 'relations' who might tie the *tāli*, but the accounts of all other writers leave no doubt that the ritual bridegroom could never have been a matrilineal kinsman of the girl. It is probable that, the *tāli* being tied either by an *enangan* or by some elderly man of higher sub-caste from which the lineage was wont to draw lovers, the ritual bridegroom might sometimes be a man who had previously had relations with some older woman of the girl's lineage. In this case he would be prohibited from entering into *sambandham* with her by the rule which forbids a man to have relations, serially or concurrently, with two women of the same lineage.

Buchanan, an East India Company doctor, seems to assume that the *tāli*-tier must deflower the bride, but might never cohabit with her thereafter. In 1800 he wrote of South Malabar Nayars: 'The Nayars marry before they are ten years of age, in order that the girls may not be deflowered by the regular operations of nature; but the husband never thereafter cohabits with his wife. Such a circumstance, indeed, would be considered as very indecent' (Buchanan 1807, p. 411). But Buchanan's account may be untrustworthy, since he later says of North Malabar Nayars: 'The female Nayars, while children, go through the ceremony of marriage, both with Nambouries and Nayars; but here, as well as in the south, the man and wife *never* cohabit' (*ibid.* p. 513; my italics), thus contradicting his earlier statement that the 'bridegroom' must deflower the bride. However, Logan (1887, p. 135), though he does not say whether the *tāli*-tier was expected to deflower the girl, states that in South Malabar the ritual husband might not solicit his 'wife's' favours in after-life.

Since I have not seen the *tāli*-rite, but relied on informants' statements, the above account is necessarily incomplete. I now add details provided by earlier writers.

For Cochin, Anantha Krishna Iyer (1909–12, II, pp. 22–9) reports that in privileged families, the Maharaja gave permission for the rite, and the woman's kin made presents to him and to important Nambūdiris before it could take place. In retainer-lineages where an *enangan* tied the *tāli*, the Asān (military leader and, in modern times, schoolmaster) of the village must be present to give permission, and was paid money and foodstuffs by the woman's *kāranavan*. Similarly, in a Walluvanād village I visited, the *tāli* was tied in the presence of the *desavari*, who received gifts for his consent. N. Subramania Aiyar, quoted by Thurston &

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588 564 178 collapsed and the old system of differential land-rights between Nambûdiris and rulers on the one hand and their Nayar tenants on the other has been seriously undermined. Yet even today Nayars remark with pride that their lineage has 'fathers' in the lineages of their former landlords and chiefs, while chiefs and royalty alike revere their Nambûdiri *genitors*, and boast that the blood of these Gods of the earth is running in their veins.

Part II: The Nayar *Tali*-Rite in North Malabar

131 133 361 [635] North Malabar lies north of the Kora River, being the old kingdoms of Kolattiri, Kurumbrattiri, and Kadattunad. Except for the coast-towns expanded by Europeans, it is sparsely populated and mountainous; part of it is forest. Villages lie separated by hill ranges, usually as clusters of houses on the hillsides surrounding small wet paddy-flats in the valleys. This contrasts with South Malabar and Cochin, where the coastal plain is wider, paddy-land extensive, and settlement usually continuous between villages.

175 631 [628] [627] Perhaps because of its difficult environment, North Malabar did not before 1792 approach the degree of political centralization achieved in the central area. The Kolattiri Rajas, it is true, temporarily conquered Kottayam, Kurumbranad, and Kadattunad, but the area was never consolidated as was the Zamorin's kingdom. Within the small kingdoms, *nâduvaris* fought each other and rebelled against their Rajas, allying themselves with different rulers as suited their needs of the moment. Neighbouring *desavaris* sometimes fought each other within the *nâd*, while within the *desam*, *kudipaga* (lineage-feud) persisted till modern times.

564 631 613 423 [614] Consistent with this lack of political centralization, high-class Nayars were not divided into sub-castes with administrative and occupational functions. Instead they had exogamous clans, dispersed between many villages. In Kottayam and Kolattunad the bulk of Nayars were Nambiars, independent land-owners owing only nominal allegiance to a chief. *Desavaris*, appointed by the Raja or the *nâduvari*, had administrative powers in their villages but belonged to the same sub-caste as other Nambiars. In most villages the land was divided between the Nayar property-groups as owners, Nayar tenancies being less common than in the south. *Nâduvari* lineages, however, usually owned the land in the whole village where they lived, employed Nambiar tenants as retainers, and claimed superior caste-rank, calling themselves Samantan Nambiars. Nambûdiri Brahmans are fewer in the north than in the south, especially since the Muslim invasions from Mysore in the 1760s, when many fled to Travancore. Those who remain live as landlords in widely separated villages, with local Nambiar lineages as retainers. The Nayar servant castes are spatially distributed as in the south. The lower polluting castes of manual workers are present in similar proportions, but Tiyyars and their washermen and barbers are matrilineal in North Malabar, patrilineal in the south.

613 [701] [566] 591 613 594 [582] *The Nayar Kinship System.* North Malabar Nayars, though trained in arms in the private gymnasia of their lineages, were not recruited as a permanent militia of the kingdom. Instead they cultivated their own lands with the aid of Tiyyar tenants, the serf castes being absent over most of the area. It seems largely because of this difference of occupation, North Malabar Nayars are virilocal: a wife moves on marriage to the ancestral house of her husband, and remains with him with rare exceptions till his death. Her children are brought up by their father and commonly return to their own lineage at puberty. A boy then begins to manage his *tarawâd* property under the direction of his *kâranavan*, while a girl is shortly afterwards married, from the lineage house, by common consent of her *kâranavan* and her father, often to the *kâranavan*'s son or to a maternal nephew of the father.

586 595 684 85 Divorce is permitted, but is rarer than in the south. Polygyny is rare, polyandry even traditionally forbidden. A cuckolded husband formerly cut off the hair of his wife and returned her to her lineage. The *genitor* has customary rights in and obligations to his children. In

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949) 1955 AWll Kerala AWll

Tiyyar

[North Malabar]

Polyandry is forbidden

polygyny more common than among Nayars. Symmetrical cross-cousin marriage is encouraged, the mother's brother's son being the rightful husband of a girl. Divorce, however, appears to be much more common than among Nayars and the domestic group less stable, especially in poor families.

For the post-puberty marriage ceremony the bridegroom comes with his parents and elders to the house of the bride. This contrasts with Nayar marriage, where the youth is accompanied by age-mates, the father and maternal uncles being prohibited from attending. This difference reflects the fact that despite virilocal residence and the comparative infrequency of divorce, North Malabar Nayar marriage is theoretically, as in the south, a contract between individuals as sexual partners and not between lineages. Moreover, the absence of the maternal uncles reflects the sexual jealousy between proximal generations in a Nayar lineage. Among Tiyyars, marriage is primarily a contract between families, a domestic arrangement for procuring food and bringing up children, as well as a sexual tie. The bridegroom's father and *kāraṇavan* jointly give gold to the goldsmith who makes earrings for the bride and places them in the tops of her ears. These rings are the mark of a married woman and are removed at divorce or death.

The feast at the bride's house is paid for jointly by the two parties. After it is over, the bridegroom's *kāraṇavan* pays a bride-price in *panams* (old-fashioned Malayali coins) to the *kāraṇavan* of the bride. This sum is called *kānam*, the word used for the sum paid by a Nayar or Tiyyar tenant to his landlord at the start of a period of tenure, nowadays fixed at twelve years. The interest on the *kānam* sum is then set off against the annual rent, and returned to the tenant if the property is returned at the end of the stipulated period. The Tiyyar marriage is thus, as Aiyappan (1944, p. 91) says, 'in theory a temporary depositing of a girl by her natural guardian amidst another group from whom a security is received and also an undertaking to take care of her'. The bride's party in return pay a dowry of jewellery and vessels. The bridegroom presents one loin-cloth to the bride and another to her mother. The couple are blessed by elders and depart to the bridegroom's house.

The Tiyyar marriage, therefore, is better defined legally than the Nayar. The *kānam* sum (which is of nominal value, in Kottayam fixed at 13½ *panams* or 3 to 5 rupees[1] and paid in the old coins long after their use as currency died out) is, it seems, a symbolic purchase of the husband's *ius in uxorem*. While this persists, he must maintain his wife. Should he lose it by the wife's adultery, his *kānam* sum is returned and his wife goes home with her dowry. In theory, he does not acquire *ius in genitricem* in his wife: this, as in all matrilineal societies, remains with her natal kin. Similarly, the father need not by law maintain his children, though he often does so in fact. These may at any time be returned to their *kāraṇavan*.

The Tiyyar Tāli-*Rite*. Since the Tiyyar *tāli*-rite died out about twenty years ago, it has been better described in previous literature than by my own informants. I therefore summarize Anantha Krishna Iyer's (1909–12, I, p. 288), Thurston & Rangachari's (1909, VII, pp. 77–9) and Aiyappan's (1944, pp. 159–62) accounts, and then add that of my informants.

The rite must be performed before puberty, on pain of disgrace to the girl's family, and, in ancient times, excommunication from caste. The day was fixed by the astrologer and the ceremony held in the girl's matrilineal ancestral house. The girl was taken to the middle room of the house and secluded for three days as if she had menstruated. Like a menstruous woman, she must abstain from meat and condiments and must not see a tree, a plant, a man, a crow, a dog, or a cat. On the fourth day she bathed in the local pool. At the pool, her brother planted an arrow with its point up, to drive away evil spirits. After bathing, the girl cut a

[1] Thurston & Rangachari report that the north Malabar *kānam* sum is 42 *panams*; Aiyappan, however, places it between 8 and 20 *panams*. In Kottayam the bridegroom's mother's brother gives 11½ *panams* to the bride's mother's brother and 2 *panams* to her mother's brother's wife.

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613 must be unrelated: if a man married an *enangar* woman, the *enangar* bond was broken and each lineage must find new, unrelated *enangar*. *Enangar* must be present to witness marriages, [769] to help at funerals, and to represent their lineage's ancestral spirits in the ceremonial food-[765] offerings to spirits on the sixteenth day after, or the anniversary of, a death. The prohibition on marriages between *enangar* acts as an insurance that the *enangar* should not be prejudiced by ties of matrilaterial or affinal kinship in their task of bringing to justice members of the linked lineage who offended against caste law. Among Nayars, this was less likely to happen because patrilateral ties were less strong than are matrilaterial ties among Tiyyars.

614 Cutting across their lineage-grouping, the Tiyyars had dispersed, exogamous matri-613 lineal clans, comparable with the clans of the north. My informants knew nothing about these 582 clans except that they were once exogamous. They are not so today, since some people do not remember their clan-names. Though the clans have died out, marriage is prohibited between known matrilineal kin.

595 The Tiyyars of this area had fraternal polyandry. In this they must be distinguished 585 from the Nayars, since the Tiyyars banned non-fraternal polyandry, while the Nayars of Malabar and Cochin forbade the marriage of one woman to two men of the same lineage, not to mention the same sibling-group. Tiyyar fraternal polyandry died out about twenty years ago. To carry out this marriage, the horoscopes of the girl and the eldest potential husband were compared and the amount of the dowry of jewels and vessels fixed. The bride-grooms went to the girl's house with their kin and *enangar*. Their mother's brother handed clothing for the bride, together with the *kānam* sum as in Norther Malabar, to the mother's [533] brother of the bride. A learned man sang a marriage formula to the effect that the girl of such a lineage was here given to the men of such a lineage, with caste-men and the sacred lamp as witness. He adjured the bridegroom's party to punish her reasonably when necessary, but to 'Keep her well, but if you are displeased with her, bring her back to us even if she has ten children, and we shall have her back, after settling the accounts in the presence of the third man [the go-between in marriage arrangements] and the *enangan*.' The bride was seated in the marriage hall at the end of a row beside her bridegrooms. The bridegroom's mother and other kinsfolk, and finally their *enangan* and his wife, fed the grooms and then the bride with porridge and with coconut-milk.

[606] The marriage was consummated shortly afterwards in the bride's house, where each husband in order of age went to live with her for one or two weeks. At the end of the honey-moon period she was brought permanently to the husband's house, where she became her mother-in-law's subordinate. The husbands cohabited with her for equal periods in turn by the arrangement of their mother. Even a child might be married to the common wife by the 595 milk-tie, and when he grew up claim conjugal rights in his much older wife. If the family were [601] large and the wife weak in health, a second and even a third woman might, at least in modern [428] times, be married by all the brothers and shared as their common wife. Children called all the fathers *appan*, prefacing distinguishing terms. Sons had equal rights of inheritance. The system mitigated against division of property, but, at least in modern times, if the family became large, brothers might, on the death of their fathers, divide the property and the children and each take one of the wives to live with him in middle life.

586 Divorce is permitted: a divorced wife returns to her brother's house, whence she may in theory be remarried. To effect a divorce, the eldest husband traditionally took a piece of thread from his loin-cloth, burnt it in two, and blew the two pieces away, saying to the brother of the girl, 'Here is your sister's *ācchram*.' *Ācchram* commonly means 'custom', and Aiyappan (1944, p. 184), interprets the phrase, 'Hereby the "thread-tie" [formed by presenting a loin-cloth to the wife at marriage] is snapped, and with it my customary rights over this woman as her husband terminate.' The earnest money was returned to the husband's kin in the

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presence of *mangar*. The young children of a divorced woman might return with her to her brother's house, but had the right to go back before puberty to their fathers' house.

In this system the husbands obtain both sexual and procreative rights in their wife, her children becoming members of their patrilineal group. The wife herself does not, however, as among Brahmans, become wholly incorporated as a member of her husband's lineage. A sonless widow whose husband left no brothers had no rights to property or maintenance by his family; she must return to her brother's house. She could not, as among Brahmans, adopt on behalf of her husband or temporarily manage his property in the absence of adult kinsmen. Though her children belong to the husband's group, the wife appears as in North Malabar to be only temporarily 'leased' by the husbands, on payments of the *kānam* sum, for her sexual and domestic services.

Moreover, though a woman cannot inherit property in her natal *taravāḍ*, the bond between brother and sister remains strong. The eldest brother is early regarded as the guardian of his sisters, who observe partial avoidance and respect to him much as in a Nayar *taravāḍ*. It is significant that at divorce, a woman is returned to her brother, not to her father or the headman of her patrilineal group. At the death of a married woman, her brothers and their children observe pollution in their own dwelling-group, assembling at the deceased's conjugal house on the sixteenth day for final rites to the spirit. At the death of a man, his sisters' sons have pollution, assemble at his house, and in the sixteen days of mourning perform offerings to the spirit immediately after the deceased's sons, and before his younger brothers and paternal grandchildren. At the death of a man, his sisters and daughters make offerings to an image of the deceased on the fourteenth day, but the widow herself (unlike the Brahman widow) takes no part in death rites. This shows the strong tie persisting between a married woman and her natal group, and the comparative lack of integration into the group of the women who marry its men. The former existence of exogamous matrilineal clans underlines this persistence of the bond between women and their natal kinsfolk, especially their brothers.[1]

The Tiyyar Tāli-*Rite*. A girl's *tāli* was tied before puberty by a boy, usually a small child, of some local *taravāḍ*, affinal or unrelated, into which the girl might marry. My informants in Cochin and Walluvanād could not remember the details of the rite, which has died out in the last twenty years. They knew that it must be done before puberty, and that the *tāli*-tier sometimes married the girl after puberty by the usual ceremonies.

According to Thurston & Rangachari (1909, VII, pp. 80–1), who describe the rite in Chavakkad, between Calicut and Cochin, Anantha Krishna Iyer (1909–12, I, pp. 285–7) who describes it for Cochin, and Aiyappan (1944, pp. 159–60) for the whole central area, the horoscopes were compared as for a marriage. The artisans provided an arrow and a brass mirror which the girl carried in her hand, a plank of the milk-tree, the rouge-bottle which figures in the eight auspicious objects, and a staff carried by the bridegroom. The local *Pānan* (a low caste of sorcerers and menial workers) brought a peacock-feather umbrella for the girl and a 'war umbrella' for the boy. A week in advance, the carpenter planted the south-east corner-post of the shed at an auspicious moment. For three days before the rites, the girl was secluded as if she had menstruated. On the day before the rites, she was taken to worship the sun, and was seated in the marriage-hall on a plank with a lit lamp, a vessel of water, rice, plantain-fruits, and a coconut before her. Her mother's brother's wife parted her hair and placed a gold coin on her crown, and the Tandan's wife (like the barber in North Malabar) anointed this three times with oil, here poured from a leaf of the *jak* tree. The girl took a ceremonial bath and was secluded in the house with a casket, a bell-metal mirror, and a sword on a stool beside her.

[1] The tie between sisters is also close. They and their children observe pollution for each others' deaths, and the sororate (forbidden among Nayars and North Malabar Tiyyars) sometimes confirms the status of the mother's sister as a proxy mother.

Nayar
Tiyyar

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68 The unconscious hostility of the son to his fathers appears in beliefs about

the spirits of dead *kāraṇavar* of the patrilineal group, which, like Nayar *kāraṇavar*'-spirits, are predatory and dangerous beasts to be propitiated with fear. Hostility to the father is however in his lifetime more deeply suppressed than to the Nayar mother's brother, as is male sibling rivalry. Among Nayars, an attempt is made to mitigate the divergent interests of married brothers by reducing to a minimum the claims of their wives and children. Their mutual jealousy is also acknowledged in the prohibition against brothers having sex-relation with the same woman. Among Tiyyars unity of marital interests is ensured by obliging brothers to share a wife. This enforced unity of brothers is the most striking feature of the Tiyyar system and that which contrasts most strongly with the matrilineal castes.

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Also among Tiyyars the father-daughter relationship resembles that of the Nayar to his sister's daughter. After she is five to six, a girl's father sternly disciplines her; with the onset of puberty an etiquette of partial avoidance is imposed. The 'possession' of women by serpent-gods of their natal *tarawād*, and the exorcism of demons during pregnancy lead me to suspect that unconscious incestuous wishes towards the father are perpetuated in women as they are towards the mother's brothers (whose images are the serpent gods of the matrilineage) among Nayars and matrilineal Tiyyars.

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The Tiyyar system is not, however, a 'regular' patrilineal one. We may suspect this from the existence of matrilineal clans. First, the father's power is not absolute: he shares it with his brothers. Second, the harmony between brothers is, as among Nayars, maintained primarily through their dependence on the mother. Among Nayars men neglect their wives and children for the sake of *tarawād* and mother. Among Tiyyars they forgo sexual satisfaction for the sake of the mother and domestic harmony: the mother controls the wife's actions and dictates the turns by which her sons may sleep with their common wife. This dependence on the mother is reflected, as among Nayars, in devotion to Bhagavadi.

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Third, the Tiyyar system resembles the Nayar in the strength of brother-sister ties. The Tiyyar father early surrenders part of the guardianship of his daughters to his sons. This appears at the *tāli*-rite where the father hands his daughter to the mock bridegroom, who returns her at the 'divorce' to her brother. The relationship between a mature but unmarried girl and her brother is, as among Nayars, one of discipline, restraint and partial avoidance. After her marriage and departure to the husband's house, the restraint between a Tiyyar woman and her brother is somewhat relaxed. Should she be divorced or widowed, however, she is returned to her brother.

The disciplinary role of the brother is reflected in the relationship to the mother's brother. He is not, as in many patrilineal systems, an intimate with whom joking and licence are permitted. He is rather a potential father-substitute, and may in fact become one if his sister is divorced or widowed. At his death his sisters' children observe pollution as for a patrilineal kinsmen and, after the deceased's sons but before his younger brothers, make offerings to the spirit. In life his claim as a potential father-in-law resembles that of the Nayar or Tiyyar mother's brother in North Malabar.

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Fraternal polyandry strengthens the claims of maternal kin, as it does the ties between a woman and her natal family. For in the traditional family, with a single common wife, there is only one set of maternal kinsfolk for all the children of brothers. Even if a second wife were taken, sororal polygyny or the sororate might perpetuate this situation. Again, it is clear that with fraternal polyandry many Tiyyar women must have remained unmarried and under the permanent guardianship of their brothers. The uncertain prospect of marriage for a woman gives us a further clue to the meaning of the *tāli*-rite.

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Having clarified the relationship of women to their natal kinsmen, we can state more clearly the probable unconscious motives for the *tāli*-rite. In all the groups her natal kinsmen retained strong though varying rights in a woman throughout her life. In all, the bond

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595 It is a point very keenly debated as to how far polyandry was prevalent among the Nāyars in olden days. During the last fifty years no trace of such a system has been found. It is to a certain extent true that there is extreme instability of marriage relationship among the commoner folk even now. But for a woman to have more than one husband at a time *seems to have been against the moral ideas of the community even two hundred years ago.*[1] Nāyar ballads and poetry of that age contain many passages where polyandry is spoken of as a barbarous and unknown custom.

But though strict polyandry does not seem to have existed at any time, traces of a *system of supplementary spouses*, very much like the Pirauru custom among the Australians, exist even now. In the *Enangar* or allied families, which we have noticed before, any woman of the same generation and in the same relationship as cross-cousin is eligible for marriage, and even if she is married, the young man whose spouse she might have been has certain rights—not distinctly conjugal, but still pertaining to it. He is the one who avenges her against insults. Her children call him "little father," and he has the right of entering any part of her apartments. Among the commoner folk a system of conjugal relationship may still exist. It is practically certain that this is a survival of the system of *supplementary spouses* such as we have in Australia and other places.

In this connection it may be interesting to notice the general position of women in Nāyar society. On *a priori* grounds we are inclined to assume that the position of women in matrilineal communities is higher than in patrilineal societies of the same standard of culture. How strongly this opinion is held will be seen from the fact that even in other parts of South India Malabar is spoken of as the "Land where women rule." It is impossible to make a general statement as to the relative status of women in matrilineal and patrilineal communities. But as far as the Nāyars are concerned, their women enjoy equality with men. They can hold property in their own right and enter the professions they choose. Traditions of scholarship and art are, perhaps, stronger among them than among men. Some of the best Malayalam poets and scholars have been Nāyar women, and at the present day the statistics of female education show a higher percentage of English-educated girls among them than among any other Indian community. All the girls' schools in Travancore are manned by them, and some of them hold such high administrative posts as inspectorships of girls' schools.

Polygamy was indeed prevalent, and is still legally permitted among the Nāyars. But this, in my opinion, does not show an inferiority of status. Though the opinion of Nāyar women would strongly be against the wife of the Akikuyu chieftain who told Mrs. Routledge that she would like her husband to have as many wives as possible,[2] there is no reason to believe that the possession of more than one wife

[1] See Note 3 at the end. Appendix on "McLennan and the Nair Type of Polyandry."
[2] Among a Prehistoric People (Akikuyu).

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jars on the moral sense of either the man or the woman. The idea that monogamy necessarily means a higher stage of culture is indeed one of those *a priori* deductions which, though incapable of proof, are still held with dogmatic reverence. Even the curious and very interesting fact that among the Mormons (whose great fault was polygamy, according to those moralists who include monogamy among the Categorical Imperatives), it was the women who fought most strenuously for the maintenance of this custom, which they considered to be their most cherished privilege. It is an indubitable fact that where polygamy exists it is the women who are its chief advocates. The men, on the other hand, consider it a great bother. I have heard many rich men to whom proposals were made for a third or fourth marriage say "sufficient unto me are the evils of one wife."[1]

On the whole I am inclined to say that women in Malabar among the Nāyars at least enjoy, relatively to women elsewhere in India, greater liberty, with regard to individual conduct, family relationship and social life. This no doubt is due to the influence of matrilineal customs.

IV.—THE MARRIAGE CUSTOMS AMONG THE NĀYARS.

The marriage ceremonies of the Nāyars have always been peculiar. Anthropologists who have studied the Nāyars have, on the whole, failed to understand the significance of these customs. In this connection I propose to speak only of three chief points. First, *The Talikettu Kalyanam* (or the matrimonial ceremony of tying the Tali); secondly, the *Sambandham* (or marital relationship); and thirdly, *Polyandry*.

The *Talikettu Kalyanam*[2] is generally performed on a batch of girls of the same matrilineal family. The age of the eldest girl is generally eleven and rarely thirteen. The idea is that this ceremony should take place before the girl attains puberty.[3] But it is not only the children of the same family that can have a *Talikettu* with the others. The daughter of a male member of the family who belongs to an *enangar* clan or who is too poor to be able to afford the costly ceremony of *Talikettu*, can, with the permission of the *village community*, be placed in a separate seat and her *Tali* also may be tied at the same time.

When the ceremony could be performed, even when a girl is only six months old, it happens that in a *Talikettu Kalyanam* all the girls below eleven are disposed of at the same time. Therefore it takes at least another twelve years for a new batch

[1] See Lecky, *Democracy and Liberty*, chapter on Mormonism.

[2] The *Tali* is a piece of metal, generally silver or gold, which stands for marriage in all the communities who acknowledge Hinduism.

[3] Among the Nāyars social puberty differs considerably in point of time from physiological puberty. It is a matter of great importance that the former should precede the latter. Any family in which a girl attains her physiological puberty, as evidenced by her first menses, before she had attained her social puberty, is socially outside the pale.

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the fourth day this mock marriage is dissolved by cutting to pieces the cloth which was given to them the first day.

The *Kalyanam* days are the gayest in the family, and when it is over women keep on saying, "Ah, it takes another twelve years for this to come."

What is the significance of this custom? It must be said to start with that it has no significance in these days. At least, for the last seventy-five years it has been merely a meaningless ceremony, a survival of a peculiar system of marriage. The tendency in these days has been to abolish it, though the movement to do so has not gained much influence, except in the higher families.

The significance of this custom in ancient days seems to have been this. It is necessary to say that a system of sexual relationship, the laxity of which made it in many cases indistinguishable from promiscuity, seems to have been prevalent among the Nāyars, even as late as the eighteenth century. The literature of the time abounds in allusions as to how fickle ladies jilted their husbands and married others. A child was supposed to be legitimate as long as a man was willing to meet the expenses of child delivery, and that phrase still survives as a form of reproach against a father who does not treat his son well. A chorus of foreign, as well as Indian evidence, however, proves that sexual relations in the higher families were of a more or less permanent character, and were generally monoganous.

The *Talikettu* ceremony was, under these conditions, the actual and religious marriage. After that custom the girl was allowed to choose her own suitor, and when such a suitor, who was her husband, dies, she does not mourn his death, or become a widow, while, when the man who actually tied the *Tali* dies she undergoes certain formalities of mourning. Also the man who tied the *Tali*, though he never sees the girl again, is called "little father" by all the members of the family. All these go to prove that the actual marriage ceremony was the *Talikettu*. It must be remembered that *Tali* (an ornament round the neck) is a symbol of marriage for all Hindus, and among Brahmins all over India the *Tali* round the neck is only broken when the husband dies. If this, then, was the real marriage, what was the actual position occupied by the priest or warrior who tied the *Tali*? The fact that he is conducted to the house after the ceremony seems to point to at least a latent conjugal right. It is quite conceivable that in the days of child marriage this ceremony implied perhaps more than a theoretical right, though, during at least the last hundred years, nothing more than the form has been observed. In this connection it is well to remember a like ceremony performed with great festivities among the *Deva-Dasis* or the "Temple-girls" in other parts of India. They also have a form of marriage which lasts for four days. On each day the girl puts on the dress of the women of different communities, and sits in a big hall, where are gathered together all the women of her local community. This ceremony, it seems, must precede before the girl devotes her life to "temple service." Since the Nāyar women, in olden days, do not seem to have had any settled form of marriage, and were free to

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vocal music, etc., goes on. One by one the guests soon depart, and the bridegroom stays in his wife's house for a few days. It must be remembered that the Nāyars are a strictly matrilocal community, though the custom shows a laxity in these days.

The *Sambandham* customs are not the same all over Malabar. They vary considerably in details, but the principle is the same all over. *Sambandham* in itself, though recognised as legal, has not the binding effect of a proper marriage. It is in theory dissoluble at will, and often it happens that, due either to misunderstanding or quarrel, either of the parties breaks off relations. In such a case, the marriage is deemed to have ended, and the aggrieved party can, without further formality, marry anybody else. The legal position is slightly altered in Travancore. By the Nāyar Regulation Act of 1912 it was enacted that if a man wants to break off his marriage relations with a woman to whom he was united by a properly conducted *Sambandham* he has to give her six months' notice and provide for the maintenance of her children by him (till they attain their twelfth year, unless the mother marries in the meantime). But this law has very little influence, and marriages and divorces go on in the same free fashion as before. In British Malabar, there is the Malabar Marriage Act of Sir C. Sankaran Nayar, the present Educational Member of the Imperial Government, by which a Nāyar entering into a *Sambandham* with a Nāyar woman can, if the parties choose to do so, register their union as a marriage to which ordinary marriage laws apply. This has been found very ineffective, for in the last twenty years during which it has been in force only six marriages have been registered, and all of them have been in the family of its distinguished author.

Before such laws came to be enacted (and to a very great extent even now) there has been singular freedom of marriage and divorce among the Nāyars. The men that a girl could possibly marry were strictly restricted by certain conditions. A Nāyar girl is not allowed to contract a marriage with men of a lower subcaste. She can marry either in her own subcaste or in castes above hers. She is not allowed to marry one who is not at least two years older than herself. She cannot marry anyone who shares pollution with her (that is descended from the same ancestress on the maternal side, however remote). There are cases when the common ancestress lived nearly four hundred years ago, but still her descendants are supposed to be so closely related in blood as to preclude matrimonial relationship of any sort.

The husband visits the wife's house after dinner, and this does not cause any particular inconvenience, as, till lately, marriage was restricted to people of one's own village or of its immediate neighbourhood. But in these days the tendency is strongly patrilocal, though ancient and aristocratic families still refuse to send their ladies out of the house. To keep within one's own house is considered to be a specially aristocratic privilege.

The question of polyandry among the Nāyars is a much debated point. This can be said with certainty: there has been no authenticated case of it at least for The last fifty years.

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the last fifty years. All the evidence that we have of this custom among the Nāyars in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, are from foreign travellers who, it must be remembered, were not allowed to come within sixty yards of a Nāyar house. Their evidence, therefore, is an extremely unsatisfactory ground for dogmatising on Nāyar customs. On the other hand, the extensive Malayalam literature of that period contains no single allusion to polyandry. The works of Kunchan Nambiar, whom it is no exaggeration whatever to compare to Molière, though he describes minutely the social life of the Nāyars of the early eighteenth century with its laxity of morals, redeemed only by chivalry of conduct, makes no mention whatever of polyandry. On the other hand, in a famous passage he makes the declaration: "It is against the laws of all castes for a woman to have four or five husbands."

Nalanchu barthavoru thikku thanatu
Nalu jatikkum Viddhichatallorkanam.

How far this statement is decisive it is difficult to say. But one thing seems to be clear from it, that the idea in itself was repugnant to the community as a whole, though individuals might have practised it here and there.[1]

V.—Birth and Funeral Ceremonies.

Among the Nāyars, as among all the people whose life is regulated by magico-religious customs, child-birth is an event of great and mysterious significance. Especially is this the case with regard to the first child. Therefore the ceremonies of nativity are of an intenser and more magical character during the time of the first pregnancy than during subsequent ones. Indeed, the mysterious nature of childbearing is entirely lost after the first time, and the ceremonies on subsequent occasions are only a few tabus, which are generally, in the phraseology of Van Genepp, "rites dynamistes directs et negatives."

The most important of the pre-natal ceremonies is *Pulicudi*,[2] or the drinking of the tamarind juice; and the customs relating it are as follows: On the appointed day all the *enangars* (people belonging to the same kingship organization) come to the house early in the morning, and the pregnant woman is taken out by one of them and bathed, after rubbing oil all over her. Then she is dressed for the occasion and, entering the house from the north, sits looking eastward. The astrologer, who being of a lower caste commonly stands in the outer courtyard, calculates the auspicious hour. He sends word when the time is come, and the *Ammāci* (the wife of the mother's brother, and mother-in-law by right of the brother) pours a few drops of tamarind juice in a small silver bowl. The brother or the uncle of the

[1] See Note 3, Appendix.

[2] Dr. Rivers makes some obviously erroneous deductions based upon this word, for which see note on "The Similarities between Nāyars and the Todas," Appendix, Note 2.

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and wives with others as a universal national custom; (c) the absence of "*Sati*."[1]

In view of the fact that the Veddas are a strictly monogamous people, the prevalence of this custom in Ceylon can only be attributed to South Indian influence. Existing as it does in almost physical contiguity, it is indubitable that these customs and the Nāyar customs had the same origin. In fact, a Naga community was spread over the whole of South India, and the pressure of Aryan emigration seems gradually to have driven them behind the western Ghats in the case of the Nāyars and beyond the straits in the case of their kindred in Ceylon.

The Laws of Philology also support this view. I am assured by Don de Z. Wickerma Singhe that the change from "ɢ" to "ʏ" (as from Naɢar to Nayar) is very commonly met with in Dravidian and Prakistic languages. Apart from the general consonance of this change to the philological rules, Mr. Wickerma Singhe also pointed out to me that in Sinhalese[2] the Sanskrit word *Nāga* is written and pronounced as *Naya*.

The word *Nāyar*, therefore, is, without a shadow of doubt, the same as the word *Nāgar*, which means serpent-men.

Note 2.—The Nāyars and the Todas.

Dr. Rivers, in his learned and elaborate study of the social conditions of the Todas, makes some interesting comparisons with regard to their customs and some of the survivals in Nāyar social life. Before venturing to criticise some of his deductions I may be allowed to state that his idea of the emigration of the Todas to their present country from Malabar is probably right, though the evidence that he has adduced does not in any way prove it. The following facts which he has not noticed may give some additional weight to this hypothesis. Among the Nāyars the dairy (*Pal-pura*) is considered a thing to be kept *ceremonially pure*. No unclean person may approach it, and even the pollution of a child-birth is considered to be sufficiently strong to preclude those whom it affects from touching things belonging to the *Pal-pura*. It would be an exaggeration to say that the *Pal-pura* is considered sacred, but it is certainly *purer* than any other part of the house. Also the way in which the Todas convert milk into butter-milk is exactly the same as among the Nāyars. These customs with regard to the dairy are prevalent, not only where there is geographical contiguity between the Nāyar-land and the Toda-land, but also in Middle Travancore, which is at least two hundred and fifty miles from the land of the Todas.

Some, however, of the arguments brought forward by Dr. Rivers would not bear critical investigation. For example, he says[3]: "More important is the custom of

[1] *Ibid.*

[2] Cf. Wm. Greiger, *Sinhalese Etymology.*

[3] Pp. 699–70.

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Note 3.—McLennan and the Nāyar Type of Polyandry.

McLennan, in his well-known book, *Studies in Ancient History*, divides polyandry into two classes, and calls one the Nair type and the other the Tibetan type. "It is in the nature of the cases," says he, "that all the possible forms of polyandry must lie between the Nair and Tibetan forms." A good deal of what McLennan says about the Nāyar customs is vitiated by the unsatisfactory character of the information at his disposal. Buchanan, on whom he chiefly depends, made a journey through Malabar, and his account is wholly untrustworthy. The loose character of the sexual tie and the licentious habits of the richer Nampudiri landlords, as far as their immediate Nāyar tenants were concerned, were naturally enough interpreted as polyandry by foreign observers. As a matter of fact distinct polyandry of any type was very rare in Malabar except among the Kāniyāns (or the astrological caste) and among them it is of the Tibetan type.

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If there existed any tendency towards polyandry among the Nāyars it was not certainly towards what McLennan calls the "Nair type." The wife of a brother is looked upon as a person to whom one could openly though not legitimately pay court; and any favour short of sexual relationship which she confers upon him is allowed by public opinion. A wife, for example, is the only woman who is allowed to smear oil on a man's back; and when a woman does it to a man it is considered to be a sort of semi-marital function. A man can always ask his brother's wife to do it for him, and it is done very often, even in the presence of the brother. Such customs are, however, open to two interpretations. As we have seen elsewhere, the *Machuna* marriage (or the marriage of cross-cousin) is the orthodox form of marriage among the Nāyars. To all the brothers alike the girl stands in the same relation before the marriage. *She could have been, in fact, the wife of any of them*, provided she was not older than her cousins. Even after her marriage with one of them this potential relationship continues to exist, and therefore all the brothers treat her "half as a sister and half as a wife."[1]

[582]

Or, it may be explained, that such relationship is a survival of a Tibetan type of polyandry among the Nāyars. It may be argued that these semi-marital functions which all the brothers can claim from each others' wives, prove the prevalence in a former time of a community of marriage relationship among the brothers. This does not seem to me to be true. Nāyar tradition gives no support to this view. We have no Nāyar stories that speak of one woman who was the common wife of her cross-cousins. In fact we have no tradition of any polyandry at all. Nevertheless, we find McLennan giving the Nair name to a particular type of polyandry supposed by him to be practised universally among them.

[1] It has been argued by Spencer and Gillen that the system of supplementary spouses affords definite evidence of a system of group marriage in a previous age. Their inferences on this subject have now been subjected to very damaging criticism, especially by Mr. N. W. Thomas, *Kinship and Marriage in Australia*, pp. 111–141.

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177 582 585 intentions to register *sambandhams* was thirty-six in 1896—97, twenty-four in 1897—98 and only fourteen in 1898—99." He accounts for the falling off as follows:—

> The mass of the people continues to regard the marriage law with aversion and suspicion, and even the educated members of the community who are in favour of the measure, shrink from taking advantage of it from fear of offending the elderly members of their *tarawadds*, and all the powerful Nambuthiris and other great landlords. The Registrar of Calicut also points out, that the power conferred by the marriage law, to make provision for one's own wife and children, has hitherto acted as some inducement to persons to register their *sambandhams*, but as Act V of 1898 (Madras) which came into force from 2nd September 1898, enables the followers of the *marumakkathâyam* law to attain this object without registering their *sambandhams*, and "unnecessarily curtailing their liberty of action, and risking the chances of divorce proceedings," he thinks it unlikely that registration under the marriage law would increase in future.

595 Polyandry. Among the Nayars of ancient times in Cochin, Malabar and Travancore, there was polyandry. In the report of the Malabar Marriage Commission, it is said, that there is evidence to show that it still lingers in Ponnani and Walluvanad Taluks, especially on the Cochin border of the former Taluk.[1] Apart from its existence in former times, it may be said that nowhere in these States is the custom still found to linger, no admitted instance of it has come to my notice in the course of my investigations into the customs and manners of the castes in the various parts of the State. An account of these customs as it existed in ancient times, and the theories that have been advanced in respect of it are of some ethnographical importance, and it may not be out of place here.

593 604 582 564 The Nayars of ancient times were, in most cases, neither regularly married, nor did they care much, when married, to support their wives and children; but their nephews (sons of sisters), who were their legitimate heirs, were properly looked after. Nayar women generally mated with Brahmans or Nayars, but never with people of lower caste under pain of death.

1. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, page 83.

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death. At ten or twelve years of age of a girl, her mother begged some one of their relations to marry her, and they did so by tying a mariage badge (*tali*). Then the bridegroom would leave her and go away without any consideration of his new relationship. She might also remain with him if he wished it. If she was not inclined to do so, the mother would then go about seeking some one to take her daughter to live with him. If the girl happened to be pretty, three or four Nayars would agree to live with her, and the more lovers she had, the more highly was she esteemed. Each man had his appointed time from midday to the next day at the same hour, during which some signal was placed at the door so that the others might not enter. She was at liberty to dismiss whomsoever she disliked. The advantage of this system was, that a man, who had not the means to support a wife, might have only a share of the cost of the maintenance. Nevertheless, there was a difficulty in ascertaining the fathers of children, who generally lived with the mothers by whom they were brought up. The fathers, in such cases, were named by the mothers. It is said that the kings made this law in order that the Nayars might not abandon their service. According to this system, the fathers were not succeeded by their sons but by nephews (sons of sisters). The above is a summarised account from 'The Travels on the East coast of Africa and Malabar' by Duarte Barbosa, from those of Lodovico Varthema, as also from the voyage of Frankoy Pyrard, page 371.

595 [588] [604] [175]

Origin of the custom of polyandry.

The orthodox view or rather the traditional account according to the *Keralamahatmyam*,[1] is that certain celestial damsels were brought from the world of Indra by Parasurama to satisfy the sexual cravings of the Kerala Brahmans; and that at Vrishabhadri (Trichur), he pronounced his commandment to the *Sámanthan* and *Sudra* castes to gratify the desires of the said Brahmans, ordering them to put off chastity and the cloth which covered their breasts, and declaring that promiscuous intercourse with three or four men in common was devoid of the least taint of sin. This is certainly a very convenient arrangement for the junior members of the Nambuthiri families to be relieved of their life-long bachelorhood (*Bramhacharyam*) without any

595 773 595 [564]

1. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, page 17.

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595 564 [184] responsibility to support their wives and children from their family property. Whether it was introduced by the Nambuthiris, it is difficult to believe; and it is to be noted, that it was prevailing to a considerable extent in North Malabar, among whom and other low castes their influence was less than in South Malabar and the Cochin State.

83 564 The *Smriti*[1] says, "the Sudras' appointed path to Heaven is serving the Brahmans". "The practice of Brahmans, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas, having sexual intercourse with the servile women is in accordance with the *sástrás*. If a Brahman wish to have sexual intercourse with a Sudra wife, the Sudra is bound to gratify the wish. A Sudra cannot be sure of the true parentage of his children". Again, before the Malabar Marriage Commission, the Zamorin Maharaja Bahadur, Ettan Thampuran Avergal, a learned Sanskrit scholar, Kolattúr Váriar and other respectable witnesses unanimously deposed, that, in Kerala, a non-Brahman or *marumakkathâyam* woman need not be chaste, and she is not forbidden to consort with more than one man. To such teachings of the learned and influential leaders [178] of the orthodox community, the Nayars of these days will no longer submit.

595 701 Another important theory connects the practice with the military organisation of the Nayar community. Montaigue was evidently of opinion, that it was introduced, because the Nayar leaders looked upon an army of bachelors as the most effective instrument in war.[2] The subjection of the males of [833] a whole race from the earliest youth to the decline of manhood must therefore have been the cause of the fugitive connection and promiscuous intercourse.

174 595 European writers, such as Baron Avebury, Meyr, Mc. Linan, and others, have arrived at the conclusion, that the system of inheritance now prevalent among the Nayars must have originated from a type of polyandry resembling free love. In [591] ancient times, the rule was that the wife should remain in [592] her own house and be visited by her husband, and that the eldest female was at the head of the house, which was afterwards transferred to the eldest male. The part of man in the [842] function of generation passed as of secondary importance or as

1. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, page 17.
2. Essays of Michael Montaigue,

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[842]

impossible to determine. It was under the influence of the tangible fact of maternity, that the notions of race, family and inheritance were elaborated and developed. Against this is the fact, that the jungle tribes and very low castes have a regular system of marriage and a kind of paternal inheritance.

Sir Henry Mayne maintains that the origin of society in patriarchal lines, is that polyandry and kinship through females are of temporary duration, liable to be brought about at any stage in the progress of society by peculiar circumstances under which it may be placed. If this were true, the popular belief that Nambuthiris brought it about to accommodate their domestic habits is easily proved.

Letourneau says that there is no warrant to consider this form of conjugal union as having been general, but that it is in exceptional form brought about by necessity in a good number of gross societies. This view to some extent is shared by Herbert Spencer who says that polyandry is one form of marital relations or arrangements independently originating in the earliest societies by successive limitations of promiscuity. Lastly, the opinion is unanimous that the Nayars and other *marumakkathâyis* are Dravidians and that polyandry and its accompanying incidents prevailed in Southern India among the non-Aryan tribes. There is strong reason to think, that the *tâli* tying ceremony, the prohibition of sexual union outside the caste, and the doctrine of *Anulomam* and *Pathilomam* were orginally introduced by Nambuthiri Brahmans as restrictions on promiscuities. Thus, so different are the views of anthropologists on this subject, that it still remains an unsettled problem in the ethnology of Kerala. As has been already said, the custom of polyandry is dead. The women of the upper and middle classes are monogamous, and marriage in practice amply satisfies the definition of Lord Penzance in Hyde v. Hyde, namely, "the voluntary union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all other".

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Polygamy.

There is nothing which prevents a man from entering into conjugal relations with more than one woman at a time; nevertheless, it is seldom practised. Indeed, when a man feels happy and contented with his own wife, very seldom has he any inclination to form *sambandham* with another for the sake of novelty unless forced by the

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595 [554] circumstances of his matrimonial life. If however he do so, his family and society will not recognise it as such, and no woman of any respectability will enter into such an alliance.

586 According to the customary rules of *sambandham*, the relationship between husband and wife, ceases at the will and pleasure of either party; but in practice, such dissolution of marriage is of rare occurrence. The woman generally does not leave her husband, while the man may send her away whenever he chooses to do so. Marriage can be dissolved only with the consent of the *kāranavans* or the other elders of the family. There are certain formalities to be observed in this connection, which vary in detail in different places, but some secret act indicating the intention of repudiation seems necessary before the divorce. In the event of the husband trying to effect a separation from his wife, he sends two or three respectable men to give intimation to the *kāranavan* of the wife's family setting forth his reason for so doing. If the wife wishes to terminate the *sambandham*, she brings it to the notice of the *kāranavan*, and with his consent tells the husband in the presence of her relatives the reasons for discarding him. In the northern parts of the State, especially in the Chittur Taluk, the prevailing custom is to send for the husband and two of the fellow caste-men and to declare the reluctance of the woman to continue as wife, in the presence of these men. In some cases, instead of the formal declaration of the dissolution of marriage, certain conduct on the part of the parties is tantamount to such a declaration, such, for instance, as the failure by the husband or his family to send the usual presents to the family of the wife for *Onam*, *Vishu* and *Thiruvithira*, the refusal of the wife's people to accept them when sent, the failure to pay for wife's sustenance attended with deliberate omission to visit her, the deliberate absence for three consecutive nights with the consent of the elders from her husband's room. As a rule, no dissolution is allowed unless the cases for the same are enquired into and discussed by guardians and relations. Though a woman is free to marry and to dissolve the union, yet, as a rule, she never does so. The fear of social disgrace and self interest stand in the way of a woman's attempt to separate from her husband. In Cochin as well as in South Malabar, the women

Duration of conjugal union.

[613] [184] 626 [184] [582]

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the eye, buffaloes with white tips to their tails, wild elephants caught in traps and wild hogs that had fallen into wells.

Even in social matters, these chieftains had supreme powers. In the settlement of marriages in any part of the country, the Nayars had to obtain the chieftain's sanction who held sway over the particular locality. The custom is even now in vogue though in a visibly weakened form. In the celebration of a *Kettu kalyánam* or *sambandham* in any part of the country, the parties concerned visited the chieftain and bought his consent with presents. For without such consent no settlement and celebration thereafter could be arranged. His consent had to be procured even for the holding of festivals.

The chieftain's powers were so great that, if a wife living with her husband proved an object of attraction to another, adequate presents to the chieftain would buy him a formal writ, giving him the rights of a husband over that woman. Thus even so late as only a generation or two ago, the chieftain's power was exercised in the encouragement of polyandry.

When a tali-tying ceremony had to be performed for a girl of any decent family in a locality, she was taken to the local chieftain with a nuzzar or *tirumulkázhcha* and other things prepared for the festival that was to follow. In return the girl was given a golden bracelet which she was authorised to wear in his presence. No girl who had not received such a one could wear it.

In certain parts of the State people were afraid to erect buildings of more than one storey, lest they should incur the inexorable wrath of the chieftain; nor were they allowed to tile thatched houses. Departures from these customs were allowed only with the consent of the chieftain, embodied in a writ issued by him. In rural parts even to this day such restrictions are not totally inoperative. In the State His Highness the Raja gives his sanction in regard to some social matters even to this day and Nambutiri landlords exercise a similar authority among the tenants occupying their lands. Certain kinds of conveyances such as palanquins and dholies were reserved only for chieftains while the *Pallichans* were the only people who were employed to carry them. Various titles [1]

1. Vide pages [illegible].

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ponderable evil, the reputation of which is great outside its boundaries.

5. POLYANDRY IN KERALA

During my stay in Kerala, I found that the following castes practise polyandry in the state: Nayars, Thandans, and Tiyas (Thiyyas) of north Cochin, Kammalans such as Tathans (goldsmiths), Karuwans, or Perinkollam (blacksmiths), Asaris (carpenters) and Puri-asaris (laterite-cutters), Musaris (bell-metal smiths of braziers); also the allied castes to these of Kolla-kurups (shampooers, masseurs, and leather-shield makers) and Vil-kurups(bow-makers), Tol-kollans (leather workers), Kanisans (astrologers), Mannans (washermen and barbers), Panans (exorcists and umbrella-makers), Pulluvans (herbalists and *nag* worship songsters). All follow *makkathayam* except the Nayars, who are *marumakkathayam* from one end of Kerala to the other.

Today, Nayars in Kerala are said, as we have seen (p. 92), to have ceased the practice of polyandry. Not only do they say so themselves, but other castes are emphatic on this point as well. Since, with the disappearance of the petty chieftains, Nayar militias no longer exist, the customs that were closely linked to these organizations have also faded away. The Mysore invasions perhaps had something to do with it, too, for Tipu Sultan was grimly determined to eradicate the Nayar armies and made this his principal objective. In 1788, before invading Malabar, in a proclamation which was intended, among other things, to be a warning to the people, he said: ". . . and since it is the practice with you for one woman to associate with ten men, and you leave your mothers and sisters unconstrained in their obscene practices, and are thence all born in adultery; and are more shameless in your connections than the beasts in the fields: I hereby require you to forsake these sinful practices and to be like the rest of mankind; and if you are disobedient to these commands, I have made repeated vows to honour the whole of you with Islam." (quoted by C. A. Innes, I.C.S. in *Malabar and Anjengo*, Madras District Gazeteers, p. 72). Many of the Moplas today, especially inland, are descendants of Nayars whom Tipu thus did "honour with Islam". They were forcibly circumcized and regaled with beef. Many, however, reconverted themselves later, but lost caste in the process and were never considered the same again.

In spite of it being said that Nayars are no longer polyandrous in Kerala, I was able to find, as I shall show further on, some families left

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[For detailed information (including genealogies) on polyandrous families in the Walluvanad Taluk of South Malabar and in North Cochin see category 116, pp. 175-225.]

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The polyandry of the Kammalans, of the four sub-castes of goldsmiths, blacksmiths, carpenters and bell-metal smiths, is in every way identical with that of the Thandans and Tiyas of the central area. This may be because they claim a common Sinhalese origin for it. The legend relates that one of the early Perumal kings of Kerala, having received some useful hints as to how to have his washing done by a *dhobi* (washerman) promised to give him a girl of the Asari (carpenter) caste in marriage. This revolted the Kammalans, and in order to avoid the degrading proposition, they emigrated in a body to Ceylon, leaving their king with none but a few workmen specialized in making roofs for the temples. The pre-historic boycott had its desired effect. The Perumal monarch, in dire distress, promised to give up the marriage he had had in mind and appealed to the king of Ceylon for the return of his indispensable artisans. These agreed to come back, but were given protection by the king of Sinhala in the form of an escort of his own subjects who brought the coconut with them, settled in Kerala and became the ancestors of the Tiyas. Presumably, the Kammalans learned the advantages of polyandry when they were in the kingdom of Kandy, and have never ceased to practise it since.

I found all the artisan families which I visited polyandrous, and I was told that the custom is still very vigorous, in spite of what outsiders have to say. The same applies to those associated craftsmen castes, the Kolla- and Vil-Kurups, the Tol-kollan, Kanisans, Mannans, Panans and Pulluvans, who do not seem either to have given up polyandry in any great numbers. Their form of the institution differs in no way from that of their fellows of the senior caste.

B. POLYANDRY IN THE WALLUVANAD TALUK OF SOUTH MALABAR AND IN NORTH COCHIN

Personal Observations

It was into this complex maze of Kerala society that I ventured, a few years ago now, to study the polyandry of some of its people. In the following pages, I give the results of this personal investigation. Thanks to my helpers and interpreters, I was able to find polyandrous households almost immediately. My first visit to the Palghat taluk and to Walluvanad allowed me to confirm that the Tiyas still practised what I was searching for, and that what I had heard about them was not incorrect. While in Tellicherry, I had the same experience, even though

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865 told me that she had had no experience with girls as she had only had boys, but that friends of hers who had had them, said that they are quieter and easier to manage.

864 Boys were much worse when it came to early masturbation. This began at the age of two with them, and they seemed to delight in playing with themselves when sitting in the sand or dust. Nani told her [595] own children that they must not do this, because it would make them sick, and it was always her and not Panju or Narayana who dealt with this matter. She noticed too, that her little boys, when suckling, would sometimes get an erection, whereupon she would beat their fingers away from themselves with a small twig. She had threatened them with castration, too, but she complained that this did not seem to have the slightest effect on them.

155 595 I enquired if Nani had noticed any preference in her boys for herself and any marked animosity and fear for their fathers or one of the fathers, at an early age. I asked her too, if, in other families where there were girls, these did not show a partiality towards their male parents. She replied that it was quite apparent that girls as well as boys preferred the mother to the fathers. As far as she was concerned, she thought that both boys and girls were more drawn to the mother than to the fathers because it was the mother who looked after them from an early age. It was, of course, impossible for me to look more deeply than this into the question of Oedipean inclinations as I had neither the time nor the opportunity to make a proper research into the matter.

864 [595] I was interested to learn that it was Nani who threatened her boys with castration when they masturbated, and neither Panju nor Narayana. What happened in the case of girls in other families, then? Nani said that they were told that they would have their genital organs pinched, and this was sometimes actually done, hard, so as to hurt. Here, I insidiously asked whether the little girls ever felt that they were castrated by comparison to the little boys, but the only effect of my question was to make them all laugh heartily – Panju and Narayana, who were eavesdropping just beyond us in the courtyard, as well.

Upon another day, while persevering in my attempts to find out about the early development of Thandan children living in polyandry, I asked if Nani had noticed a period of calm in which the children ceased masturbating and seemed no longer to take any interest in sexual matters. She took this seriously and replied yes, that she had noticed such a lull. Between the ages of four and thirteen, they were very quiet, with only brief, temporary interruptions. At the end of this time, boys and girls

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Thandans. With the latter, a lot of men were known for their proclivities of this sort, and they were nearly as bad as the Moplas, I was told. The latter were very much addicted to sodomy, but then it was part of their culture, and had been acquired with Islam from the Arabs.

There was no impotence or frigidity in Kerala, not with any caste, I heard. People were far from "cold" and passion, rather, was the rule. I was given a long description of the consummate art with which the higher castes indulged in amorous pleasures and assured that the lower castes had only learned from them. It seemed, however, that the Thandans could never hope to excel in these matters, especially the women who were still far from being the "angels" which those of their superiors undoubtedly were.

Asked about crime, neurosis, and insanity, my interpreters said that, to their knowledge, there was little of these in the area. As only recently, since my arrival in Shoranur, a Thandan woman had assassinated her husband, I remarked on the circumstance and asked them how they reconciled it to their statement. They replied that it was an exceptional event, and that for a long time previously, nothing of the sort had happened. People, on the whole, were docile and not aggressive. They did not even indulge in poisoning, which occurred quite frequently in other parts of the country. Again, insanity seemed to be restricted to the Moplas, who, apart from occasionally running amok as is well known, had members of their community frequently tied up in a mosque or to iron stakes, in the hope that they could thus be cured.

D. POLYANDRY AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN KERALA

Unquestionably, polyandry no longer thrives as it did in Kerala and research into what changes have brought about this situation over the last two hundred years cannot fail to be of interest. I myself, having returned to the area after an absence of ten years, was able to notice many alterations, although these were not sufficient to warrant any specific consideration. Dr A. Aiyappan, Superintendent, Government Museum, Madras, has made a particular study of the Irava community, and in his publications on this subject, and on the more special aspect of polyandry in other castes of Malabar, has shown what factors are involved and how foreign contact has undermined the old culture and is bringing a new one into existence. Readers are referred to his books and articles listed in the Bibliography. I give here a brief outline of his

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177 564 members have been the ablest of all in adapting themselves and in taking advantage of the new opportunities which the Europeans brought. To them have gone the best and most rewarding jobs both in and out of the administration, positions of trust and responsibility to which their long training as soldiers and managers of the upper castes in Kerala had possibly prepared them. I was astonished to find how many well-known names in present-day India still have their homes and families in Ottappalam of the Walluvanad taluk.

It has already been said how very much the Tiyas, everywhere in Kerala, have progressed, and how they, too, have taken enormous advantage of changed circumstances, especially education, to become today one of the most progressive communities in the State. Aiyappan's book is witness to this. Perhaps only the lower castes, such as Kammalans, other artisans, Cherumas, Pulayas, aboriginals and the poorer section of the Mopla Islamic community, have remained as they always were, and have shown no signs of taking advantage of the benefits brought in by foreign rule. It is not to be excluded, however, that it may be precisely for them that the new Communist government will legislate, especially for the landless agricultural labourers – but it is too early to say anything about this yet.[1]

179 564 595 Following closely upon the replacement of the old order by a new one, polyandry, too, has crumbled in Kerala. The Nayars, whose non-fraternal polyandrous customs so forcibly struck the early Portuguese and other European travellers, have ceased to practise polyandry, at least in the pristine form in which it was described by the ancient writers. Since this polyandry appears to have been closely correlated with the military organization of the Sudra militiamen of the local rajas and chieftains, it was perhaps to be expected that, when the latter disappeared, the custom of non-fraternal polyandrous marriage went with it. Particularly as men living in a *marumakkathayam* system of inheritance seem to suffer greatly from the fact that they can leave nothing to their children, but only to those of their sisters. In a conversation that I had with His Highness the Maharaja of Cochin, at Ernakulam on the 18th of April, 1949, he told me that it was "un-natural" for a man not to be able to provide for his own children, and that, in his opinion, the custom could not survive much longer for this reason.

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[1] A step has been taken in this direction with *The Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill 1957* which introduces comprehensive land reforms, including the right of "permanent tenants" to purchase land held by them, a ceiling on land holdings and fixation of fair rents.

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There appears to be no doubt that Thandans and Tiyas (Thiyyas) of the central area are gradually giving up polyandry. Others have reported on the speed with which it is disappearing, sometimes exaggerating the rapidity, it seems to me, but nevertheless correctly stating that not many more years will pass before the custom has become simply a memory, as it is with the Nayars. I think a distinction should be made, however, between the more wealthy, upper members of the caste and the lower, poorer ones. In fact, polyandry with the Thandans and Tiyas is being abandoned from the top, and this observation is valid not only for their community, but also for polyandry in general in Kerala.

It is the upper castes, who have had greater opportunity to educate themselves, adapt themselves to higher standards and lead a more modern, Europeanized type of life, who are giving it up as something primitive and unworthy of self-respecting citizens. Within the castes, however, it is not always the upper strata that has progressed in this way, as can be seen with the Nayars, where polyandry is reputed to be practised still in the conservative court circles of Cochin and Travancore. Among the Thandans and Tiyans it is the other way round, the upper class either professes not to follow the custom any longer or really abstains from doing so. The Kammalans and associated artisans nearly all continue to be polyandrous, and as they are without exception people of very slender means, a distinction such as the one made here does not apply.

Aiyappan, discussing new trends in the Irava community, has written: "Differences in occupations and income and the development of new sexual standards are two active forces that one sees in operation against polyandry." (*Iravas and Culture Change*, p. 103.) Iravas, according to him, had formerly very few avocations from which to choose. They pooled their resources and worked for the house, their common wife and their children, without making any individual reservations. Today, matters have changed and the men each want a different type of work, chosen from among the numerous new occupations which are open to them, and aspire to have their own family, wife and children. The old ways are no longer fashionable, and are even despised and considered to be primitive and barbarous. Jealousy thus reappears, and asserts itself in no uncertain way. The women, too, do not want to be shared any longer by a number of brothers, and prefer to return home or refuse polyandrous marriages rather than be joined in wedlock in the traditional manner. In North Cochin, however, it was the progress of the people in higher levels of the Thiyya caste that brought about a legal inter-

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diction of polyandry. (For a synopsis of the Act of 1940, see p. 238 ff.)

While travelling round with my guides and interpreters in 1949, I had ample opportunity to hear what the polyandrous families were thinking about the ancient form of matrimony which was beginning to be despised. Here are some of the remarks which were made to me in the course of my interviews:

Raman, the informant of the Appayl Wattakkeh household, said that if only twenty five per cent of two hundred and fifty Thandan families in the Walluvanad taluk still practised polyandry today, it was because the Moplas, Nayars and Brahmins ridiculed the practice as low-caste and primitive. The Thandans wanted to reform themselves and aspired to higher things, therefore they had to give up polyandry as representing something backward.

Velu, informant of the Kereghetil household of the Katukulangara *tarawad*, told me that as long as the property was undivided, they practised polyandry, as it kept them from having many wives in whose quarrels they might become involved and thus break with each other. But now, as each man wanted to go his way, things were different, and polyandry was no longer possible.

It will be remembered that, on the 2nd of November, 1949, I attempted to visit a rich Tiya household near Kunnamkulam in north Cochin, only to be put off by an old man, accompanied by a younger one, who assured me that no one was polyandrous in their family any more. When I went on to a poor labourer's house nearby, I was told that this was not true. There were three brothers in the older generation (one of whom was the elder of the two men to whom we had spoken) and they lived in polyandry, although, being wealthy, they did not like to admit it.

In the Kaladiwalapil household, that of the miserable Tiya labourers next door, in the village of Perumpillav, the informant, Raman, said that the ancient custom by which brothers shared a common wife, and thus avoided the quarrelling among sisters-in-law in which they feared to become embroiled, was changing now because the younger people found it "more convenient" to be monogamous. When I asked him what he meant exactly by this phrase, he replied that "times have changed" and that it is "easier" thus. Not yet satisfied, I insisted on more clarification, whereupon I heard that polyandry is "not done any longer", that it was "out of fashion", and not "modern". Raman was unable to express himself better, and seemed plainly puzzled and embarrassed by my request for a more precise explanation.

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I obtained the same kind of answer from Panju of the Appayl Wattakkeh household, it will be recalled, when I asked him how it was that his maternal uncle consented to get a new wife for him and his brother, Narayana, when they refused to live any longer in polyandry with Raman and Kuniyama. He said that his mother's brother had certainly begun by resisting the request, but that, in the end, he had given in because "times have changed" and he could not very well force them to remain in their present marriage if they said that they were dissatisfied with it.

It was Panju, too, who gave me the unexpected information that it was "immorality" that was breaking up polyandrous households. Women were not at all chaste any longer, he said, and anybody could have them "for a song". So every man now wanted a wife of his own whom he could control, instead of submitting himself to the old discipline and consenting to remain without complaint in the old polyandrous type of union.

My experience with Kammalans and other artisan castes was different. Polyandry with them is also threatened, but it cannot be said that it has deteriorated to the same extent with them as it has with the higher castes. Jealousy, however, seems to be coming very much to the surface, and I heard many tales of serious quarrelling among the men, leading to separation and to division into splinter households.

Raman, the *Asari* informant of the Perinkulam household, interviewed at Palappuram, said that polyandry was dying out because "Civilization is spreading". When I asked him what he meant by "civilization", he answered, rather simply, that people did not tie up their hair any longer in the typical Malayalam way, a top knot in front over the forehead, and that many had taken to growing moustaches. He added, however, to these very personal criteria of his, that women refused now to be wedded to many men; some wealthier people, he revealed, even go so far as to insert a clause into the marriage contract by which it is stipulated that their daughter will not be given in marriage to more than one man. He concluded by sighing, shrugging his shoulders and exclaiming that it was not right, but what could be done about it?

Kunji, the daughter of old Kurumba of the *Tolkolan* Palakaparampil household near Meitenadeshan, also complained of too much quarrelling among the men of a polyandrous family, and said that because of this, the women did not want to be married in this way any longer. She attributed to these reasons the fact that her household had already given up polyandry in the previous generation.

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177 595 Because of the profound cultural changes which have fundamentally modified the social and economic structure of Kerala society, it can be said that polyandry is on the decline in that part of the world. Circumstances no longer favour the marriage of many men to one woman, and the custom is not only being abandoned as useless, but those who, by tradition, should follow it, look upon it with abhorrence and with growing disgust. To those who have practised it so long, as something good and moral, it has become, nowadays, something barbarous, primitive an unworthy of them: times have changed and it simply is not done any longer.

ADDENDUM

671 *Act XVII of 1115, the Cochin Makkathayam Thiyya Act, passed by His Highness the Maharaju of Cochin on the 18th day of Kumbham 1115, corresponding to the 1st day of March 1940.*

C.V. Iyyu, former Member of the legislative Assembly of Cochin State, told me on the 27th of October, 1949, that he was on the Commission which in 1937-38 drafted the Cochin *Makkathayam* Thiyya Act of 1940. The majority of the members of the Commission were Tiyas (Thiyyas) and the initiative of the enactment was due to V. K. Krishnan Kutti, M.L.A., *wakil* of Trichur, himself a Tiya. The Act is thus a Tiya legislative reform and not a foreign one. This would explain the fact that it is observed. I hear that the idea is a result of the education and progress of the Tiya community, which now ranks as one of the most accomplished in Kerala.

Some of the main provisions of the Act are given here below. They are those that concern definition of the name Thiyya, of an heir's sex in doubtful cases, acceptable forms of the marriage solemnity, prohibition of polyandry (art. 12), succession both testamentary and intestate:

Chapter I. Five articles.

[101 564 428] Art. 5, (i): "Thiyya includes Ezhuva, Chova, Billava, Marayan, Thandan and others recognized as such." It adds: "When owing to any physical defect or deformity, it is not possible to ascertain the sex of any of the heirs of an intestate, such heirs shall, for the purpose of this Act, be regarded as female."

[585] Chapter II. Marriage and its Dissolution. Thirteen articles.

Art. 6: "Conjugal union may be openly solemnized in any of the following ways:

a) by the tying of the Mangalya Sutram
b) by the presentation of cloth to the female by the male
c) by exchange of rings
d) by mutual garlanding, and

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671 [585]

e) by mutual consent evidenced by a registered instrument attested by not less than two witnesses."

[595]

Art. 12: "A polyandrous marriage performed after this Act shall be void."

Chapter III. Maintenance and Guardianship. Three articles.

Chapter IV. Succession.

Five articles on testamentary succession.

671 428

Art. 26: "For the purpose of succession there is no distinction between the self-acquired property and the ancestral property or between the property of a male and that of a female except as otherwise provided by this Act."

Eight articles on Intestate succession.

Art. 28: "Property in respect of which a Thiyya has died intestate devolves upon the wife or husband or upon those who are of the kindred of the deceased in this order and according to the rules herein prescribed."

Art. 29: "When the intestate had left more than one widow, the distribution of inheritance referred to in sections 30, 31, 32 and 33 shall be made as if there is only one widow, all the widows together taking equally one widow's share."

Art. 30. "When the intestate has left a widow, if he has also left a son, or lineal descendant of a son, a share equal to that of a son shall belong to the widow."

Eleven articles on distribution of intestate's property.

Art. 39, (b): "If some of them (lineal descendants) are his (the intestate) sons and others are his daughters, each daughter shall take a half of the share of a son if the intestate is a male, and if the intestate is a female all children shall take equally."

It should be remembered that this legislation is that of a former princely state which has ceased to exist as a separate unit. Today, since the coming into being of the State of Kerala, made up of Malabar, Mahe, Cochin and Travancore, this Act has been superseded by the provisions of the India Code in force now in the whole of the Indian Republic. In accordance with the stipulations of the Code, a larger share of inheritance is granted to daughters and widow than was formerly allowed by the Cochin *Makkathayam* Thiyya Act.

[648]

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principal oil-man ; and it is the duty of this caste to present the Kurumbranâd Râja with oil on the occasion of his formal installation. The fifth group consists of the three kulams, Mannangazhi, Parâmchela, and Pallikara Nâyars, all observing fifteen days' pollution. A member of the first-named class has to place an âmanapalaga (the traditional seat of Nambûdiris and other high castes) for the Kurumbranâd Râja to sit on at the time of his installation, while a member of the second has to present him with a cloth on the same occasion. The sixth group consists of four kiriyams named Patam, Tulu, Manan, and Ottu respectively, and has the collective name of Râvâri. The seventh group consists of six kulams, Kandôn, Kannankôdan, Kotta, Karumba, Kundakollavan, and Panakâdan Nâyars. All observe fifteen days' pollution, and the women of these six kulams have certain duties to perform in connection with the purification of women of the Vengalat, Pattillat, and Orakatteri kulams. Besides these seven groups, there are a few other classes without internal sub-divisions. One such class is known as Pâppini Nâyar. A woman of this class takes the part of the Brâhmini woman (Nambissan) at the tâli-kettu kalyanam of girls belonging to the kulams included in the third group. Another class called Pâlattavan takes the place of the Attikurissi Nâyar at the funeral ceremonies of the same three kulams."

In illustration of the custom of polyandry among the Nâyars of Malabar in by-gone days, the following extracts may be quoted. "On the continent of India," it is recorded in Ellis' edition of the Kural, "polyandry is still said to be practiced in Orissa, and among particular tribes in other parts. In Malayâlam, as is well known, the vision of Plato in his ideal republic is more completely

595 [585] realised, the women among the Nāyars not being restricted to family or number, but, after she has been consecrated by the usual rites before the nuptial fire, in which ceremony any indifferent person may officiate as the representative of her husband, being in her intercourse with the other sex only restrained by her inclinations; provided that the male with whom she associates be of an equal or superior tribe. But it must be stated, for the glory of the female character, that, notwithstanding the latitude thus given to the Nāyattis, and that they are thus left to the guidance of their own free will and the play of their own fancy (which in other countries has not always been found the most efficient check on the conduct of either sex), it rarely happens that they cohabit with more than one person at the same 586 time. Whenever the existing connexion is broken, whether from incompatibility of temper, disgust, caprice, or any of the thousand vexations by which from the frailty of nature domestic happiness is liable to be disturbed, the woman seeks another lover, the man 587 another mistress. But it mostly happens that the bond of paternity is here, as elsewhere, too strong to be shaken off, and that the uninfluenced and uninterested union of love, when formed in youth, continues even in the decline of age."

595 [20] In a note on the Nāyars in the sixteenth century, Cæsar Fredericke writes as follows.* "These Nairi having their wives common amongst themselves, and when any of them goe into the house of any of these women, he leaveth his sworde and target at the door, and the time that he is there, there dare not be any so

* The Voyage and Travell of M. Cæsar Fredericke, Merchant of Venice, into the East Indies and beyond the Indies (1563). Translation. Hakluyt Voyages, V, 394.

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hardie as to come into that house. The king's children shall not inherite the kingdom after their father, because they hold this opinion, that perchance they were not begotten of the king their father, but of some other man, therefore they accept for their king one of the sonnes of the king's sisters, or of some other woman of the blood roiall, for that they be sure that they are of the blood roiall."

In his "New Account of the East Indies, (1727)" Hamilton wrote: "The husbands," of whom, he said, there might be twelve, but no more at one time, "agree very well, for they cohabit with her in their turns, according to their priority of marriage, ten days more or less according as they can fix a term among themselves, and he that cohabits with her maintains her in all things necessary for his time, so that she is plentifully provided for by a constant circulation. When the man that cohabits with her goes into her house he leaves his arms at the door, and none dare remove them or enter the house on pain of death. When she proves with child, she nominates its father, who takes care of his education after she has suckled it, and brought it to walk or speak, but the children are never heirs to their father's estate, but the father's sister's children are."

Writing in the latter half of the eighteenth century, Grose says * that "it is among the Nairs that principally prevails the strange custom of one wife being common to a number; in which point the great power of custom is seen from its rarely or never producing any jealousies or quarrels among the co-tenants of the same woman. Their number is not so much limited by any specific

* Travels to the East Indies.

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595 law as by a kind of tacit convention, it scarcely ever happening that it exceeds six or seven. The woman, however, is under no obligation to admit above a single attachment, though not less respected for using her [201] privilege to its utmost extent. If one of the husbands happens to come to the house when she is employed with another, he knows that circumstance by certain signals left at the door that his turn is not come, and 564 departs very resignedly." Writing about the same time, 595 Sonnerat * says that "these Brahmans do not marry, but have the privilege of enjoying all the Nairesses. [648] This privilege the Portuguese who were esteemed as a great caste, obtained and preserved, till their drunkenness and debauchery betrayed them into a commerce with all sorts of women. The following right is established by the customs of the country. A woman without [851] shame may abandon herself to all men who are not of an [604] inferior caste to her own, because the children (notwithstanding what Mr. de Voltaire says) do not belong to the father, but to the mother's brother; they become his legitimate heirs at their birth, even of the crown if he is king." In his 'Voyages and Travels', Kerr writes as follows. † "By the laws of their country these Nayres cannot marry, so that no one has any certain or acknowledged son or father; all their children being born of mistresses, with each of whom three or four Nayres cohabit by agreement among themselves. Each one of this cofraternity dwells a day in his turn with the joint mistress, counting from noon of one day to the same time of the next, after which he departs, and another

* Voyage to the East Indies, 1774 and 1781.

† R. Kerr. General History and Collection of Voyages and Travels, 1811, History of the Discovery and Conquest of India by the Portuguese between the years 1497 and 1525, from the original Portuguese of Herman Lopes de Castaneda.

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comes for the like time. Thus they spend their time without the care or trouble of wives and children, yet maintain their mistresses well according to their rank. Any one may forsake his mistress at his pleasure; and, in like manner, the mistress may refuse admittance to any one of her lovers when she pleases. These mistresses are all gentlewomen of the Nayre caste, and the Nayres, besides being prohibited from marrying, must not attach themselves to any woman of a different rank. Considering that there are always several men attached to one woman, the Nayres never look upon any of the children born of their mistresses as belonging to them, however strong a resemblance may subsist, and all inheritances among the Nayres go to their brothers, or the sons of their sisters, born of the same mothers, all relationship being counted only by female consanguinity and descent. This strange law prohibiting marriage was established that they might have neither wives nor children on whom to fix their love and attachment; and that, being free from all family cares, they might more willingly devote themselves entirely to warlike service." The term son of ten fathers is used as a term of abuse among Nāyars to this day.* Tīpū Sultān is said to have issued the following proclamation to the Nāyars, on the occasion of his visit to Calicut in 1788. "And, since it is a practice with you for one woman to associate with ten men, and you leave your mothers and sisters unconstrained in their obscene practices, and are thence all born in adultery, and are more shameless in your connections than the beasts of the field; I hereby require you to forsake these sinful practices, and live like the rest of mankind."†

595 564 [851] (604) [578] [648]

* Wigram, Malabar Law and Custom, Ed. 1900.

† T. A. Kalyanakrishna Aiyar, Malabar Quart. Review, II, 1903.

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595 As to the present existence or non-existence of polyandry I must call recent writers into the witness-box. The Rev. S. Mateer, Mr. Fawcett writes,* "informed me ten years ago—he was speaking of polyandry among the Nāyars of Travancore—that he had 'known an instance of six brothers keeping two women, four husbands to one, and two to the other. In a case where two brothers [797] cohabited with one woman, and one was converted to [17] Christianity, the other brother was indignant at the Christian's refusal to live any longer in this condition.' I have not known an admitted instance of polyandry amongst the Nāyars of Malabar at the present day, but there is no doubt that, if it does not exist now (and I think it does here and there), it certainly did not long [564] ago." Mr. Gopal Panikkar says † that "to enforce this social edict upon the Nairs, the Brāhmans made use of the powerful weapon of their aristocratic ascendancy in the country, and the Nairs readily submitted to the Brāhman supremacy. Thus it came about that the custom of concubinage, so freely indulged in by the Brāhmans with Nair women, obtained such firm hold upon the country that it has only been strengthened by the lapse of time. At the present day there are families, especially in the interior of the district, who look upon it as an honour to be thus united with Brāhmans. But a [178] reaction has begun to take place against this feeling, and Brāhman alliances are invariably looked down upon in respectable Nair tarwads. This reactionary feeling took shape in the Malabar Marriage Act." Mr. Justice K. Narayana Marar says: "There is nothing strange or to be ashamed of in the fact that the Nāyars were originally of a stock that practiced polyandry, nor if the

* *Op cit.* † Malabar and its Folk, 1900.

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practice continued till recently. Hamilton and Buchanan say that, among the Nāyars of Malabar, a woman has several husbands, but these are not brothers. These travellers came to Malabar in the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. There is no reason whatever to suppose that they were not just recording what they saw. For I am not quite sure whether, even now, the practice is not lurking in some remote nooks and corners of the country." Lastly, Mr. Wigram writes as follows.* "Polyandry may now be said to be dead, and, although the issue of a Nāyar marriage are still children of their mother rather than of their father, marriage may be defined as a contract based on mutual consent, and dissoluble at will. It has been well said (by Mr. Logan) that nowhere is the marriage tie, albeit informal, more rigidly observed or respected than it is in Malabar: nowhere is it more jealously guarded, or its neglect more savagely avenged."

In connection with the tāli-kattu kalyānam, or tāli-tying marriage, Mr. Fawcett writes that "the details of this ceremony vary in different parts of Malabar, but the ceremony in some form is essential, and must be performed for every Nāyar girl before she attains puberty." For an account of this ceremony, I must resort, to the evidence of Mr. K. R. Krishna Menon before the Malabar Marriage Commission.†

"The tāli-kattu kalyānam is somewhat analogous to what a dēva-dāsi (dancing-girl) of other countries (districts) undergoes before she begins her profession. Among royal families, and those of certain Edaprabhus, a Kshatriya, and among the Charna sect a Nedungādi is

* Malabar Law and Custom, 1882.

† Report of the Malabar Marriage Commission, 1894.

TODA AW 60
KERALA AW 11

K 131 595 596 428 591

Tiya Polyandry. The Tiyas, living in Malabar, exhibit one especially interesting phenomenon: they are a polyandrous people who are patrilocal (that is, the woman marries and goes to live with her husbands), but also matrilineal (that is, the property that they have—and they do not have much, because they are common laborers—is inherited from the mother's brothers). Unfortunately, I did not have much time to investigate these people because the war broke out when I had only been at work among them for three weeks. Thus, the only thing I could note was that they are polyandrous, patrilocal, and matrilineal at the same time. I should like to return and see how this works out.

T: 123 To 123 K 123

General Conclusions. I am afraid that some of these results may seem superficial. I was unable to stay as long as I should have liked among all these peoples. I did not know any of their languages well, and to really do good field work, one would have to live among them and not put questions to them as I did. However, I hope to return and to do a more thorough study.

T: 155 To 155 K 155

As far as the psychoanalytical results are concerned, I think that they are highly illuminating, though not sufficiently ample to be conclusive. There are strong indications that, broadly speaking, psychic mechanisms, libidinal development and mental structure may be identical to those in the West. There are, thus, numerous instances of trends pointing to Oedipus and castration complexes. What I, however, really investigated insufficiently was where we should place the relative borderline between what is specifically culturally determined in psychology (such as traits due to family environment) and what is generally humanly so (such as sociobiological traits).

K 595 182 To 595 182 T: 595 182

As far as the ethnological results are concerned, these can be examined from two different angles. Functionally, polyandry fulfils the same purpose as all other marriages: it is a social institution for the satisfaction of the individual sexual in-

TODA AW60
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KERALA AW11
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stinct and for the orderly social procreation of offspring. Formally, it is more difficult to say why this institution has taken on this curious appearance. As far as I know, authors so far have been rather at a loss to furnish a satisfactory explanation. Many, of course, have been given, with a great amount of variety in their choice.

For instance, we are given historical explanations. In India they say people have been polyandrous for many centuries; that there are indications, such as archaeological (about the Heftalite Huns, 6th c. A.D.) and literary (the Indian epic poem, the Mahabarata), that the people in this area, both Aryan and non-Aryan, were polyandrous in antiquity. Economic reasons for this have been given; *i.e.*, that the country is poor, that nomadism among Todas or Tibetans, in earlier times, perhaps led to a polyandrous society in order to limit the number of children. Then, demographical explanations have been given, that there is an excess of males over females in this society, and that they have to be polyandrous for that reason. For instance, the Todas practise female infanticide and this is given as a reason for their polyandry. Their men drink a lot of milk, and some people say that the fact that they have more proteins in their diet in this fashion produces more male offspring than female. I do not pretend to know how far this biological explanation is true. Sociological reasons have also been given, namely, that the men travel and have to leave one brother at home with the wife (a reason which I hinted at earlier). In east and south India, the people known as the Nayars, who once could also be called polyandrous, had a very definite military organization (somewhat like that of the Sikhs in the north), and that has been given as a reason why a people is polyandrous: one brother can always remain at home with the wife while the other is away serving with the colors.

It seems to me that these explanations are not sufficient. As far as the historical

reasons are concerned, the Mahabarata epic is the only case of its kind in the whole of India. The Todas, when you ask why they are polyandrous, always say "Because we are the same people as those of the Mahabarata", but I am convinced that they have got this explanation from the anthropologists and not the other way around! As far as the economic reasons are concerned, these also seem to me insufficient, because there are people living in the same area, in the same physical environment, who are not polyandrous. Even the Tibetans, when they become Moslems, though their environment does not change, suddenly cease being polyandrous and live in the Islamic fashion. The rich Tibetans in central Tibet are also polyandrous, and obviously not for economic reasons.

As regards the demographic reasons, the following statistics will show that there is not always an excess of males over females. In the Leh *tehsil* in Ladak, where I was, there are 14,760 men to 14,650 women, which is approximately equal. The excess of single women among the Tibetans (there are some left over, naturally, considering the number of brothers who have one wife) usually go into a monastery and become nuns. That is the way they solve their problem. The Todas, on the other hand, practise female infanticide, so that there are less women than men. However, back in Tibet, in the same town of Leh, one finds that the Hindus who live there number 36 men and 13 women, and yet they are monogamous. In southern India, there is a Moslem community known as the Moplahs, in which there are five men to one woman, and they are polygynous rather than polyandrous. Even in Europe, the Bulgars have 35,000 more men than women and yet, though they may have many faults, they certainly are not polyandrous.

As far as the Todas are concerned, out of the 600-odd that exist, there are 340 men and 237 women, so that it really looks as if the reason given might be true in

435 Site values of land for building are getting higher and higher in the 'town', chiefly because the Shoranur-Cochin Railway now runs through this place, the principal offices of the taluk are here, and a high school has just been opened. Rs. 500 per acre may be paid in the 'town'; Rs. 50 to Rs. 100 in the rest of the village area. But the best wet land fetches up to Rs. 1,500 per acre. Cultivable land fetches far higher prices than building land, because only land unfit for cultivation, of which there is enough, is used for building.

423 [343] The practice of exchanging lands is unknown. Generally, though not always, holdings are continuous. Field huts, built in the midst of their fields, are often used by big farmers. The seeds, the harvested paddy and other crops, the stock, the implements, etc., are kept there.

296 *Subsidiary industries.*—Weaving is not practised. In the north-eastern part of the State, however, handloom weaving of an exquisite sort and also of a rough character is practised.

285 735 [787] [791] Mat-weaving of an exquisite pattern out of certain reeds duly coloured is practised by a set of people locally known as 'Koravas.' The condition of these men, however, is miserable. They have no capital, no organization or culture, but usually make their wares to order, though now and then a few enterprising middlemen avail themselves of these people's skill. They talk a jargon of Tamil and Malayalam, and their females, like gipsies, beg from house to house and profess themselves to be adepts in palmistry. They make mats costing from Re. 1 to Rs. 15 or Rs. 20. They yet live from hand to mouth; and I have my doubts whether they will be able to keep up their skill unless knowing people help to raise their economic condition.

564 [595] [783] Every village moreover contains within its borders the following castes who follow their hereditary crafts:—the Marasari (carpenter), Kallasari (mason), Tattan (goldsmith), Musari (brazier), Kollan (blacksmith), and Tolkollan (leather-worker). There are a few families of each of these castes in Watakanchery also. "As their services are much in requisition and as they earn better wages than unskilled labourers, they are still engaged in their hereditary occupation. The first five groups are socially in a par with each other. They all interdine, but do not intermarry. But the Tolkollans are considered inferior in status to the rest and cannot touch them without causing pollution, probably on account of their work in leather which in its raw state is considered impure. Polyandry of the fraternal type was prevalent among them, several brothers marrying one wife and the children being treated as common to all. This practice however is fast dying out, if it has not already done so." (Census Reports.) One special feature in the caste-hierarchy is that these people are made to stand at a specified distance while approaching the higher castes (24 feet is the rule).

466 326 These castes minister to the every day needs of the community, executing their work generally to order. As they are very poor, they cannot afford to work on their own account on a commercial scale. The village usually contains a recognized *desa-asari* (village smith) to whom the farmers pay a certain amount of paddy at the harvesting season of the year for the repair of their implements. None but the village-smith is entitled to this dole. These may entertain apprentices from their own caste-people, though the

31: Slater S-5 (1916-1917) 1918 AWI India
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582 837 *Marriage customs.*—The custom of marriage before puberty is prevalent among Hindus, excepting Nambudris and Nayars. The Nambudris or Malabar Brahmans can give their daughters in marriage at any time they like or not marry them at all. Only the eldest male member of a Nambudri family can marry in his own caste. All the other sons keep Nayar women as mistresses. The eldest member can marry more than one wife, but many women of necessity have to remain unmarried.

[428] [586] The case of Nayars is entirely different. They follow a different system of inheritance, i.e., descent through the female. The result of this system is that the female is at full liberty to choose or to divorce husbands as she likes. The man also has the same liberty. As a consequence of the different systems of inheritance their marriage custom is also different. Before puberty some person closely connected with the family ties the sacred string round the neck of the girl. This custom is purely formal and does not make them husband and wife. Nowadays this formal business is done by the mother of the girl at the temple in the presence of God. After puberty the man who really wants to marry the girl (he must be of the same caste or some one belonging to a higher caste, preferably a Nambudri) comes and performs the real marriage. This real marriage is binding only so long as he and she will. Divorce can be had at any time by a mere word. The woman can marry again. The death of the man does not make [585] the woman a widow. There is no widowhood for Nayar woman. In fact there is no marriage among the Nayars. What actually happens is that somebody comes and lives with a woman for a time, then leaves, and both live with others. The only restriction is that two men cannot live with one woman at the same time, but one man can cohabit with any number of women at the same time. The children [428] born of such unions inherit the property of the uncle since the descent is by the female line. Nowadays there is a strong opinion against this system and the descent from father to son is advocated by the educated few, and the proposed regulations in Cochin are attempts to make marriage binding and permanent and dissoluble only under certain circumstances, widows being still allowed to remarry.

[587] [595] With regard to all other Hindus, marriage before puberty prevails. But among the lower classes widow-marriage is allowable, money for a bridegroom is not demanded, and even polyandry is prevalent among certain sections of the Tiyyas. But only brothers can share a wife. A brother can marry his widowed sister-in-law. *Divorce* is allowed in cases of serious infidelity but divorced men and women can marry again.

562 *The purdah system* is followed by the Nambudri women alone in Malabar. They cannot see men. Whenever they come out they hold a big native kind of umbrella to hide their faces and come to the temple, etc. The ideas about the purdah system among them are changing nowadays and the abandonment of the system is hoped for in a few years. The Nambudris are also advocating changes in their marriage customs.

428 The property of a Nambudri or Nayar family cannot be divided among the family sons. The eldest has the right to manage the property and enjoy the profits. The other members of the family have a right for ma[illegible]enance only. When the eldest dies the next to him in age comes to the position. Inthe case of a Nambudri

31: Slater S-5 (1916-1917) 1918 AWI India
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582 There is no infant marriage except perhaps among the Brahmans. Our girls are given away in marriage between the age of 10 and 12. Formerly it used to be younger. But strictly speaking this is only betrothal, the actual consummation of the marriage taking place only after the girl has attained womanhood at about 16 years of age. Our girls are very healthy and well developed so long as they remain at home. But their husbands take them away with them when they are old enough to the places where they are employed, e.g., there are three of them in Madras, and others nearer home. Boys are seldom married before 20 or 21 and the age is rising. Having to live away from home for their education their health is often impaired and they are less healthy and have less vitality and power of resistance than the girls, and are, in the writer's opinion, more subject to illness when away from home. Brahmans have to pay large dowries, whether they are able or no: the least sum being Rs. 1,000 for a bridegroom whose educational qualifications are measured by the Matriculation examination. Even 'ne'er-do-weels' get a high dowry owing to the unsatisfied demand for bridegrooms. We are groaning under the tyranny of an effete social system which is ruining us. Yet our elders protest against any change in our social system, such as post-puberty marriage. Something is sure to be done to remedy this state of things before long: the social conscience cannot long stand it.

Among other castes there is no infant-marriage, nor the system of dowries as it exists with us.

585 Among the Nayars there is a curious marriage ceremony performed when a female child is only a few days or months old. Some male person, not necessarily or ordinarily the future husband, ties the sacred marriage thread around the baby's neck. This ceremony is purely formal. Real marriages take place after puberty, and the girl may choose any man she pleases as her husband, this marriage being not at all formal, and great freedom, comparatively, is allowed to the wife. Polyandry, which once [595] prevailed, has now disappeared.

582 The purdah system does not exist except among the Nambudri community of Brahmans. There are two families of Nambudri [612] Brahmans in our village. Their females can never see the faces of any males except their husbands and near relations. They seldom go out to any distance, except to the temple, never travel by railway, and hide themselves, when going about, with huge umbrellas made of palm leaves and bamboo sticks. There is post-puberty marriage among them, and only the eldest son of the family marries. Marriages are often exchanges of bride and bridegroom (i.e., a brother and sister marry the sister and the brother of another family), and in that case dowries need not be paid. Otherwise heavy sums are paid. The Numbudri Brahmans are noted for their simple lives, their Vedic learning, and their intense conservatism, though one very enlightened and aristocratic family near my village owns a tile factory at Shoranur and a large 556 part of a spinning mill at Calicut. They lack western education. This year one Nambudripad (i.e., a member of the Nambudri aristocracy) has joined the Presidency College in Madras as an extraordinary student, to get the benefit of the lectures and the college life. He belongs to the family mentioned above, who also

4: Yalman E-4,5 (1954-1956) 1971 AX4 Sinhalese
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564 611 [591] here turns out to be patrilineal and patrilocal. We shall see that, as usual, the question of descent is attached to the same general structures as elsewhere.

613 We first note that the "patrilineage" of the South is called a *taravad* like the matrilineal units of the Nayar. The patrilineage is reported to be exogamous with a depth of five to seven generations united by the worship of lineage gods, ancestors, and snakes. Marriage tends to be patrilocal, and one of the interesting features of the Tiyyar of this area is that, as with the Sinhalese, polyandrous marriages are freely permitted. A woman is married to a group of brothers who have access to her, it is said, by order of seniority. The ceremony of marriage again involves the gift of the cloth, and we note the custom of feeding the groom or grooms and the bride with porridge and milk as with various groups in Ceylon.

595 [594] [171] 585 171

593 [428] [586] Inheritance is in the male line, but women retain rights in their natal household. Indeed, this right is expressed in the customary relations between brothers and sisters. At divorce, the woman returns to her brother. Her eldest brother is considered her guardian. At the death of a married woman, her brothers and their children observe ritual pollution. At the death of a man, his sister's sons observe pollution and perform mourning offerings to his spirit.

[765] [783]

604 588 [613] [605] The customary claim of the MB and the FZ are given recognition in numerous ceremonies. In the prepuberty rituals, a girl goes through a mock-marriage ceremony with a boy from a "lineage" into which she might marry, who clearly stands to her in the relation of cross-cousin. Her "mother's brother's wife" (FZ?) parts her hair in certain pregnancy ceremonies. The ritual husband-boy is brought by his MB, and the girl by her MB. The boy places the *tali* necklace—indicative of married status—on her neck, where it is tied by her FZ.

582 605 114 Gough notes that cross-cousin marriage is "preferential," though with the observation that it is not "enjoined to the extent" that it is in the North (1955*a*, p. 62). It is clear that this statement refers to actual cross-cousin, not categorical cross-cousin, marriage. We are informed that parallel cousins on both sides are tabooed and must conclude that here again we have the Dravidian pattern of categorical cross-cousin marriage.

601 576 I have no information about the terminology of reference or address, though it seems likely that terms of reference, at least, are identical to those of the North Tiyyar.

121 602 I think that all the elements of the general structure can be detected in this system. There is categorical cross-cousin marriage, and the various claims of the MB and FZ upon Ego are indicated in ritual terms. This is quite in accordance, as we noted before, with the strong